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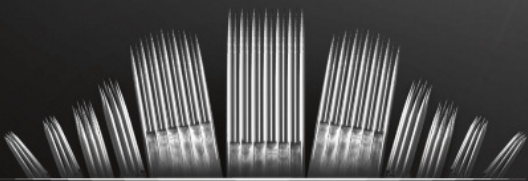
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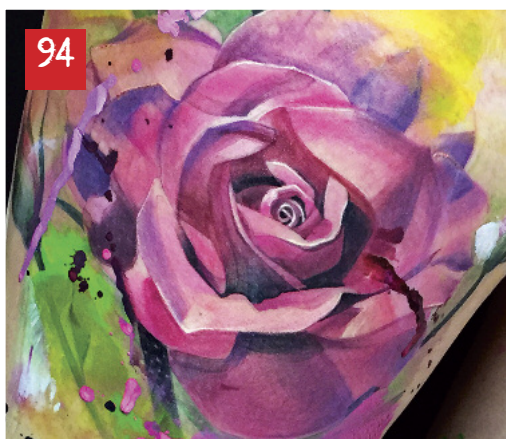
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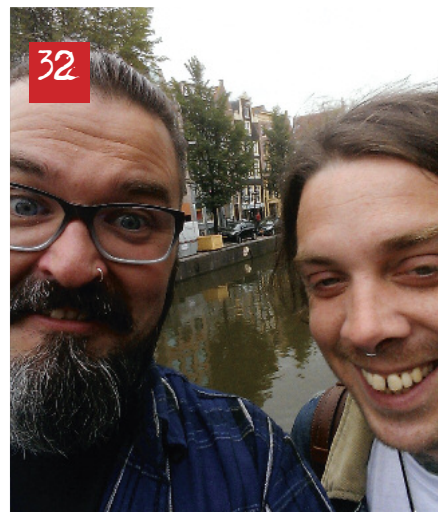
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94



94



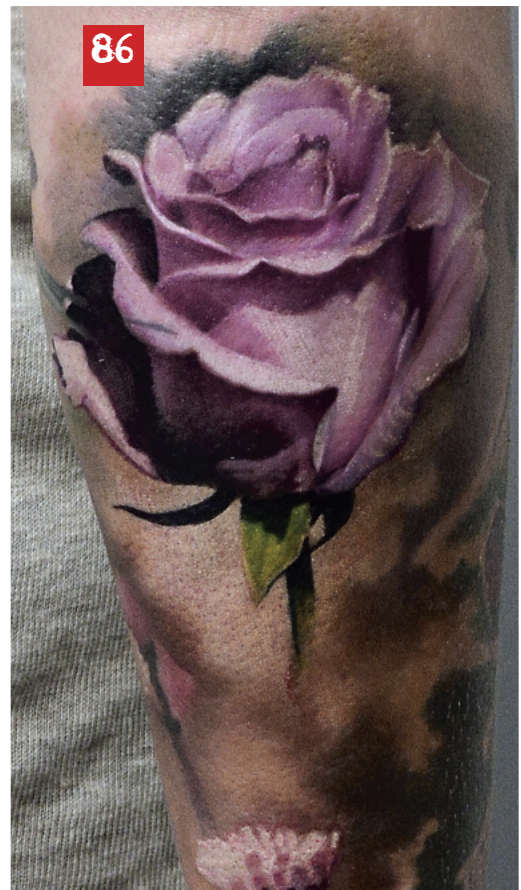
32

CONTENTS 136

36



86



79



7 WELCOME TO ISSUE 136

James's view of the world

8 NEWS & REVIEWS

All the news that's fit to print

14 LITTLE SWASTIKA

Creating a tattoo revolution

24 THE INTERNATIONAL BRUSSELS TATTOO CONVENTION

Major European show in Brussels

32 ON THE ROAD WITH NICK WHYBROW

The third and final part of Nick's guest spot tour of Europe

36 COVER MODEL PROFILE

Airica Michelle blinds us with her beauty

38 JAMES LOVEGROVE

An all-rounder specialising in Japanese

44 TALES FROM THE NAUGHTY STEP

Paul Talbot takes a swipe at sponsorship

47 GALLERY

Inspiring tattoos from around the world

58 JACK RINGO

Part one of an exclusive interview with long term legend

65 TATTOOING IN IRAQ

Skinzophrenic Tattoo an Iraq tattoo studio with a touch of 'blighty'

70 PORTFOLIOS

Arran Burton from Cosmic Tattoo
Callum Berry from Aberdeen Tattoo Collective

74 TALE OF TWO EAGLES

Wings spanning the generations

79 HALLOWEEN TATTOO BASH

Things get spooky in Wolverhampton

86 KAROL RYBAKOWSKY

Ten steps to the perfect tattooists

94 IN FOCUS

Borderline Tattoo Collective

96 CONVENTION CALENDAR

Time to start planning

97 NEXT MONTH

We take a peep into the future

98 MUGSHOT

Peter from Southmead Tattoo makes his way to the hot seat

Cover Model - Airica Michelle
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Images must be high resolution (300) and sized at 100mm by 150mm. The disc needs to be labelled with the artist & studio name. Or email them to galler@totaltattoo.co.uk

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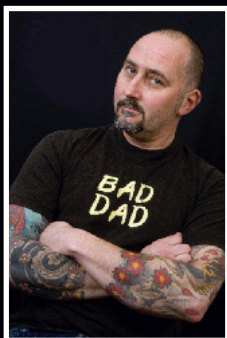
As we celebrate the New Year and cruise into 2016, it seems that tattooing is more widely accepted than ever before. The general public has become desensitised. Many who had previously sat on the fence have fallen onto the side of tattooing (and fallen in love with it) and the depth and breadth of tattooing's current appeal seems to be surprising even those in the tattoo world. Importantly, the powers-that-be are finally realising that it's better to be on board with tattooing, utilise the experience and expertise of established artists and studios, and build a constructive dialogue that will enable us to address the problems that face us all. Problems such as unregistered studios, unhygienic practices, and the cheap tattoo supplies that are flooding the country and getting into the hands of people who simply should not have access to them.

But what if things had swung the other way, and the very legality of tattooing was in question? That seems to be what is happening in Japan right now.

Few countries can boast such a massively influential tattoo history. While other cultures were still scratching around, Japan had already elevated tattooing to a sophisticated, disciplined artform. But it hasn't all been plain sailing. Tattooing was banned in the late nineteenth century because it no longer fitted the modern image the country wanted to project. It was forced underground, and was only legalised again after the Second World War. And it's only in recent years that it's begun to be recognised as an artform again, something more than a way for the Yakuza to identify themselves. The latest threat has come very much from the blind side. Recent legislation – originally introduced to clamp down on cosmetic tattooing in beauty parlours – states that the only people permitted to pierce the skin with a needle are licensed healthcare professionals. This law hasn't previously been applied to tattoo artists, but it's being enforced now and tattoo artists are being fined for not having a medical licence! If this continues, the future of tattooing in one of its spiritual homes is looking grim.

So, as always, we've got an interesting twelve months ahead of us. Plenty of challenges, but plenty to enjoy too. We're going to bring you the best the tattoo world has to offer, and we look forward to having you along for the ride.

James Sandercock
editor@totaltattoo.co.uk



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NEWS & REVIEWS

Tattoo news and reviews for your delectation and delight. If it goes on in the tattoo world, it goes in here. Send us your news items, books or products for review and items of general curiosity and intrigue for the tattoo cognoscenti.

News, Total Tattoo Magazine, 111 Furze Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 0AU

SCOTT CAMPBELL

Whole Glory

Never one to box himself in, artist Scott Campbell has once again stepped outside of what tattooing considers 'the norm'. His Whole Glory installation at the Milk Gallery in New York this November certainly tested the boundaries of the client-tattooist relationship. The focus of the exhibition was a mysterious hole in the gallery wall, on the other side of which sat Scott, waiting for his clients. He was offering to tattoo, free-of-charge, any arm that came through the hole.



No other communication was permitted. Clients, selected each day at random, were told that Scott would tattoo "whatever he was inspired to do" and they wouldn't get to see their tattoo until it was finished. Scott worked from a mixture of pre-prepared sketches and designs made up on the spot. He described the creative process as being almost like "palm-reading", touching the clients and responding to them subconsciously.



He said that he was extremely nervous about the project, because he would never want to do a tattoo that someone regretted getting, but excited by the magical freedom of the concept.

BOOK REVIEW

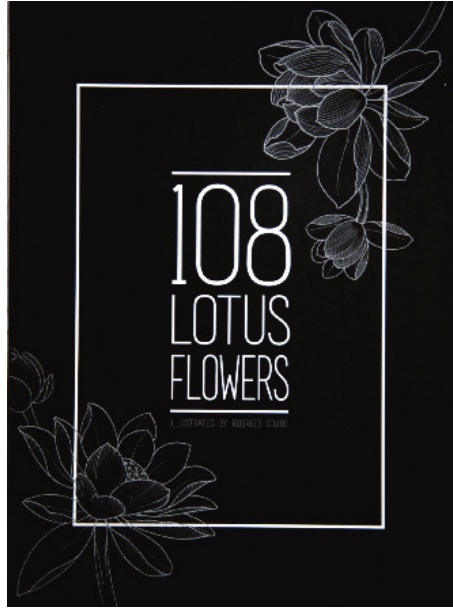
108 Lotus Flowers by Rodrigo Souto

58 pages, hard cover

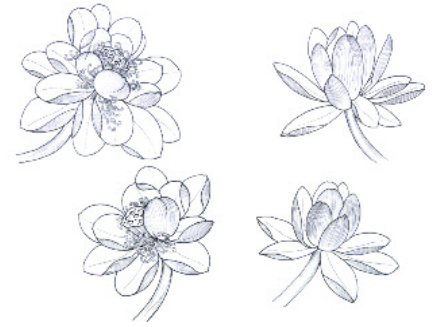
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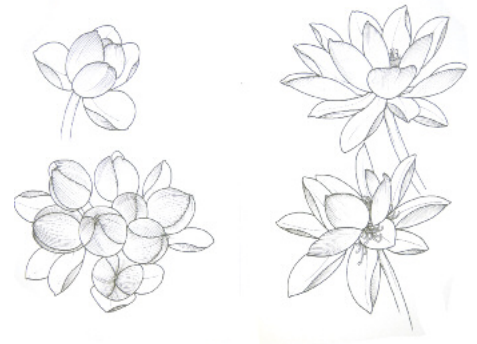
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Following the success of his beautiful in-depth exploration of the peony (as featured in Total Tattoo Issue 125) Rodrigo Souto has turned his attention to another classic bloom plucked from Asian art, the lotus. He studies the flower's form through a series of 108 line drawings, and once again he has captured its essence to perfection.

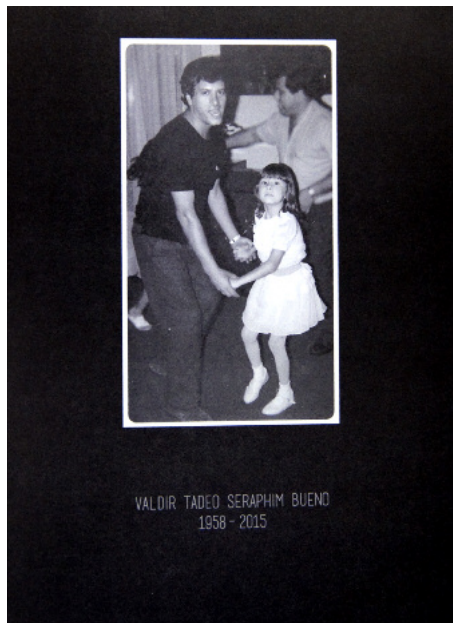


In the book's short introduction, Rodrigo tells us "As in life the lotus flower is born from the muddy waters of its origin, with a spiritual promise of attaining enlightenment and to achieve its divine beauty in bloom. A beauty equivalent to that of the human spirit." Movingly, he adds "Half of the drawings for this book were created at my father's bedside in the final weeks of his life" and he dedicates the book to him.



CONFIDENCE BOOSTER

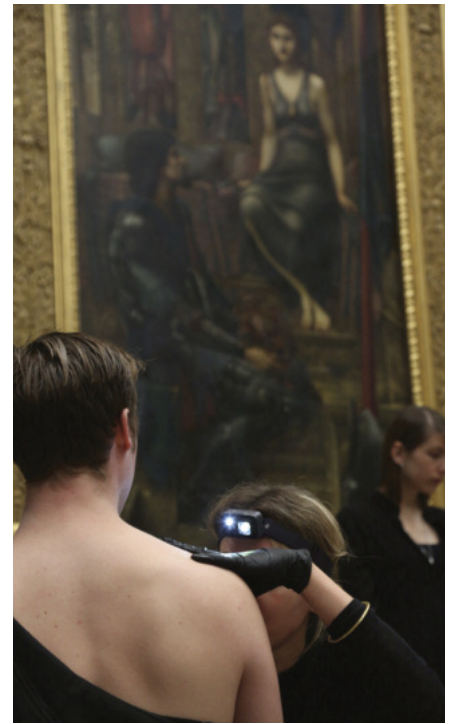
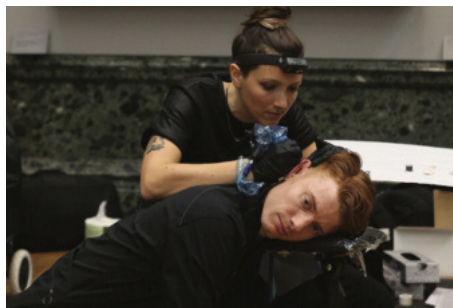
Dr Jerome Koch at Texas Tech University has been studying the sociological aspects of body art for years. His latest research, focusing on women with multiple tattoos, has revealed a strong correlation between tattoos and emotional well-being – concluding that getting inked is often a way to reclaim the self, especially after an emotional crisis such as a suicide attempt. The full report, entitled 'Tattoos, Gender and Well-Being among American College Students', is due to be published soon. For details see <http://today.ttu.edu/posts/2015/11/tattoos-may-be-coping-mechanism-for-some-college-age-women>



TATE PROTEST

On Saturday 28th November, Tate Britain became home, albeit briefly, to a very different type of art that displayed on its walls. Thirty five climate change activists occupied one of the galleries for the day and proceeded to tattoo each other. Their aim? To shine a spotlight on rising levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide ahead of the Paris climate change summit. The unsanctioned performance was led by Liberate Tate, an artist

collective that regularly protests against the ongoing corporate sponsorship of Tate by petrochemical giant BP. Each of the performers received a simple tattoo representing the amount of carbon dioxide



in the Earth's atmosphere in the year of their birth. Total Tattoo contributor Dr Matt Lodder took part. He was born in 1980, when the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide was 338 ppm (parts per million). In 2015 that figure rose to, and exceeded, 400 ppm. Truly alarming.

NEEDLE GANGSTA GIVEAWAY

TATTOOS IN THE NEWS

There have been welcome reports in the media that Police Scotland may be reviewing their policy on tattoos because the current guidelines are seen as a barrier to much-needed recruitment.

Elsewhere, a couple of disturbing news reports about tattoos, terrorism and hate crime caught our eye. In Tel Aviv, Israel, a man was thrown out of a studio when he asked the tattooist to add an Islamic State logo to his Al-Qaeda piece. The police were informed, but they could not charge him with anything and had to release him as he had not technically committed a crime.

Meanwhile, in Germany, a man was spotted at a swimming pool with a large tattoo of the Auschwitz death camp on his back, with the words "each to his own". In Germany, displaying Nazi slogans or anti-Semitic messages is illegal. As we go to print, we understand the authorities are still searching for the man.

Tattooist Required: Gilded Cage in Brighton are looking for an experienced tattooist to work 3 days a week from February. Email your portfolios and CV to gildedcagetattooostudio@gmail.com

The annual Needle Gangstas Tattoo Expo will take place over the weekend of 6th and 7th February. It's being held at the iPro Stadium in Derby and will be open from 10am until late. The event is strictly over-18s only and some of the entertainment will be of an adult nature. The organisers are planning to include many surprises (including a world record attempt). As well as live entertainment the event will feature a variety of alternative traders and artists from around the globe.

The Needle Ganstas have kindly given us 3 pairs of weekend tickets to give away. If you would like to be in with a chance of winning, simply email comps@totaltattoo.co.uk with DINOSAURS in the subject line and your answer to the following question:

In which year was the film Jurassic Park first released in the UK? Was it...

- (a) 1933
- (b) 1993
- (c) 2013

The first 3 correct entries out of the hat will win. Be quick! Closing date 15th January. (Terms & Conditions on p5)



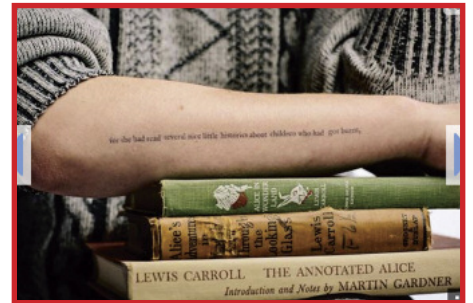
TANKS A LOT HARLEY

Harley-Davidson UK recently ran a Facebook competition for a tank illustration to be executed on their stand at the NEC's Motorcycle Live. Tattooist Sharnie Pilar of New Wave Tattoo and Eternal Tattoos was the delighted winner – and she said afterwards that she only entered the competition after persistent pressure from a friend! The design was executed by artist Tim Hornfeck from Graffiti Life.



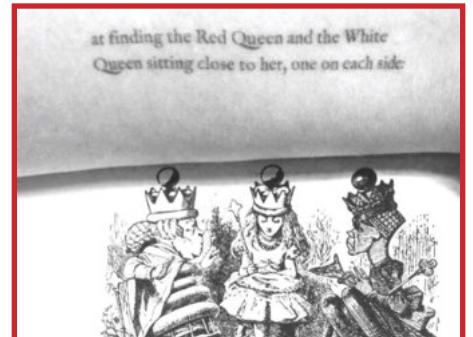
SOMETHING FOR BOOKWORMS

If you associate temporary tattoos with childhood memories and bubblegum, think again. Litographs have taken the concept to a much more elegant level with their range of literary-themed temporary tattoos. To celebrate the launch, they decided to try to create a 'tattoo chain' of 5,000 quotations from Alice in Wonderland.



Each backer of the project received a temporary tattoo featuring a passage from Lewis Carroll's classic story. Participants then uploaded pictures of themselves wearing the transfers and some of these can be viewed at www.tattoos.litographs.com

Check out the other literary designs that are available too. A nice concept for booklovers who want to show their appreciation of literature, but perhaps can't commit to the permanence of tattooing.



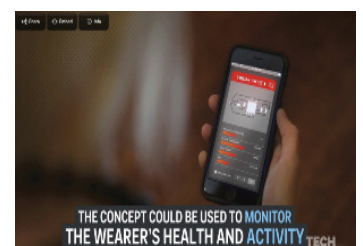
TATTOOS ON THE TERRACES



With Manchester City football club changing their logo, die-hard supporters might be wondering what to do about their tattoos of the old-style badges. If you're one of these fans, and you don't want to keep your old tattoo, your luck might be in! There have been reports that the club will be offering to pay for any laser treatment that is necessary to erase the old logo and make way for the new one...

TECH TATTOOS

Texas-based software design and development company Chaotic Moon Studios (www.chaoticmoon.com) have produced a prototype 'tech tattoo'. Described as 'semi-permanent biometric devices' or 'biowearables', you stick these to your skin in the same way as you would a temporary tattoo. Conductive pigments and tiny electronic components embedded into the design can monitor your heart rate, measure your blood sugar, count your steps, time your workouts, etc, and communicate or upload this valuable data too (with obvious uses in medicine and fitness training). These clever temporary tats can also be used as location trackers – for those concerned about the whereabouts of their children perhaps. Watch this space for further developments.



EXHIBITION: TATTOO LONDON

Tattoo London: Under the Skin is the title of a forthcoming exhibition at the Museum of London. Yes, you heard it right, the Museum of London. Here in the Total Tattoo office there is nothing, and we mean *nothing*, that gives us a warmer glow than when tattooing gets the credit it deserves – not only as an art form, but also as a cultural and historical phenomenon. So this was real cause for celebration. The exhibition is all about the capital's association with tattooing from the 17th century to the present day. Running from 29th January to 8th May, it will feature both historic and contemporary photographs alongside new artworks from the likes of Lal Hardy, Alex Binnie, Claudia de Sabe and Mo Coppoletta. And on 22nd February, if you're lucky enough to get a ticket, there's a special evening event where you can meet the artists, listen to an illustrated talk by well-known tattoo historian Matt Lodder, and enjoy some great music and an after-hours bar as well as viewing the exhibition itself. Check out www.museumoflondon.org.uk and watch this space for Total Tattoo's feature on this major exhibition.



JACK RINGO RIP



We were very upset to hear the sad news that Jack Ringo, one of the fine old gentlemen of tattooing, had suddenly died following a short illness. He was a great artist who tattooed in South East London for more than 70 years. I had the great pleasure of interviewing Jack earlier this year and he was one of the nicest people you could ever hope to meet.

He was sharp-witted, warm and a true gentleman who held tattooing firmly in his heart.

I will always treasure the time I spent with him.

Rest in Peace, Jack

Perry

Total Tattoo Magazine

Part One of my interview can be found on page 58 of this issue
(I am sorry he never got to see it)

YAKUZA APOCALYPSE

Director Takashi Miike's latest offering is *Yakuza Apocalypse*, a vampire action fantasy with an irresistible Japanese gangster setting. The film had its world premiere at Cannes Directors' Fortnight, wowed audiences at the London Film Festival, and will be released in UK cinemas this month.



If you're familiar with Miike's earlier films, you'll have some idea of what to expect. If you don't know his work, you're in for a treat. Insanity and slapstick are essential ingredients and in *Yakuza Apocalypse* things get kinda crazy. Central character Kageyama is given a hard time by his fellow gang members because his sensitive skin means he cannot be tattooed like them. But he has the last laugh when he inherits the vampire powers of his fearsome Yakuza boss, who has been brutally murdered by a rival gang, and embarks on a bloodthirsty quest for revenge. But that's only the beginning, and doesn't even scratch the surface of the convoluted plot. Words like "gruesome", "chaos" and "bizarre" don't even come close to describing this rollickingly surreal gore-fest.

Get a bucket of popcorn and watch the trailer here:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgQk5i3anzQ

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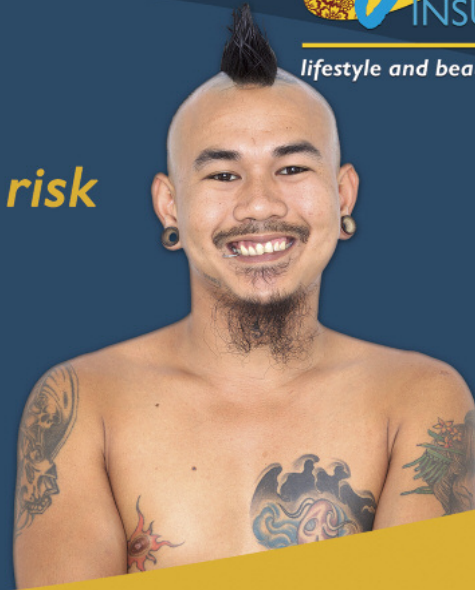


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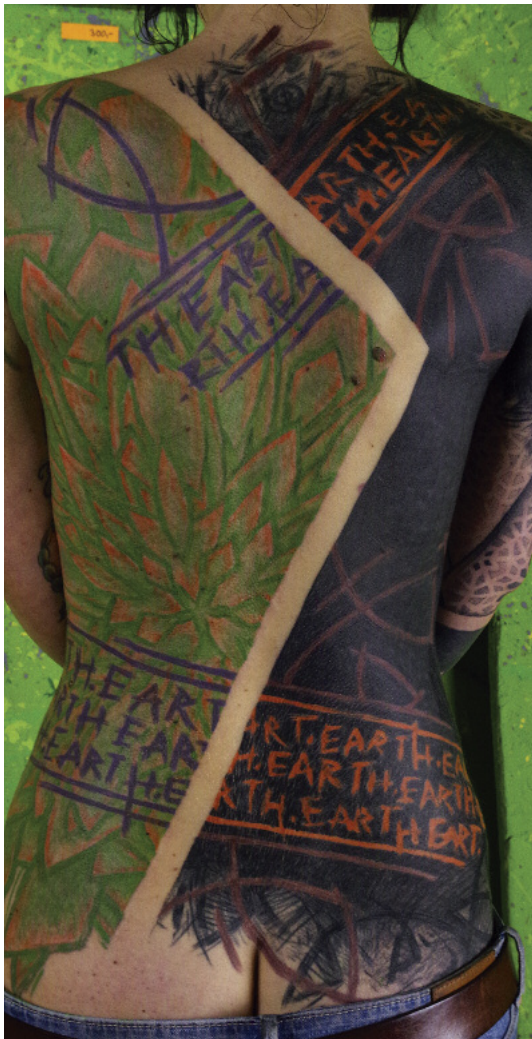
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Interview by James Sandercock
Pictures by Little Swastika



Little Swastika is pushing the boundaries of tattooing. His art is big and bold, and it has massive energy. People react to it viscerally. It's easy to see why his clients become so committed to his vision. There's absolutely no compromise in Little Swastika's work – and, deep down, who doesn't want to be involved with something like that?

It's his innovative multi-person tattoos that have made Little Swastika's art so widely known. Each individual tattoo is a piece in a puzzle; the image can only be completed by bringing all the tattoos together to unify the design. This gives the wearers of the tattoos a unique connection with each other, and makes each piece a group experience as well as a personal journey. Tattooing across several backs allows Little Swastika to create work on an unprecedented scale, and each client becomes part of something larger than just their own tattoo. Our interview took place just after he'd completed a swastika tattoo covering four backs.



What has brought you to this point on your creative path?

Progression and life. I think the most important thing is to go through the world with open eyes. I try to see things differently, think differently. Some would say 'think outside the box', but I just burn the box down! When you've been living outside the box for a while, *this* becomes your normality... and your mind screams again to leave the newly created box. And so on. As my technique has progressed, I've been able to make larger pieces in fewer sessions. Backpieces are all I've been doing for many years now. And once you've done a couple of hundred of them it's just the same as any other tattooist tattooing stars and letters all day long.

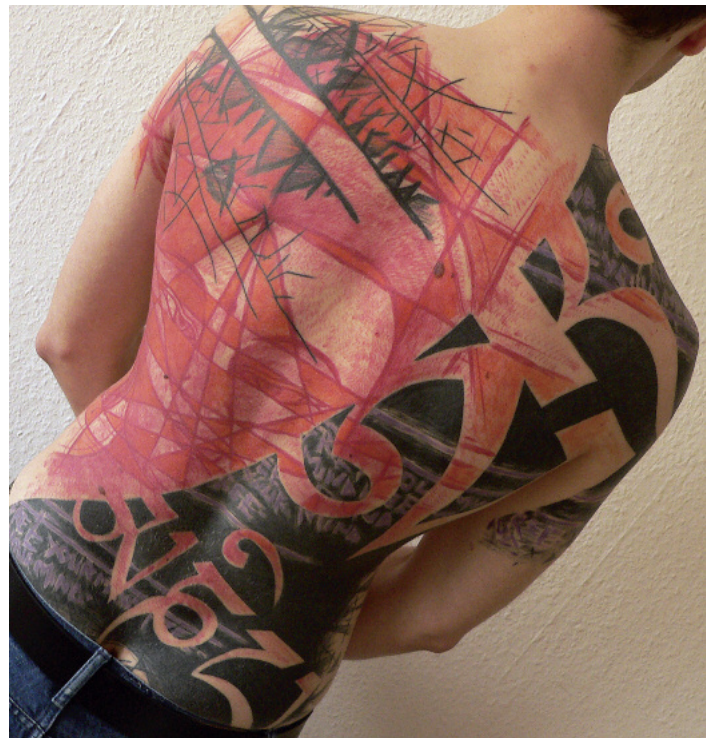
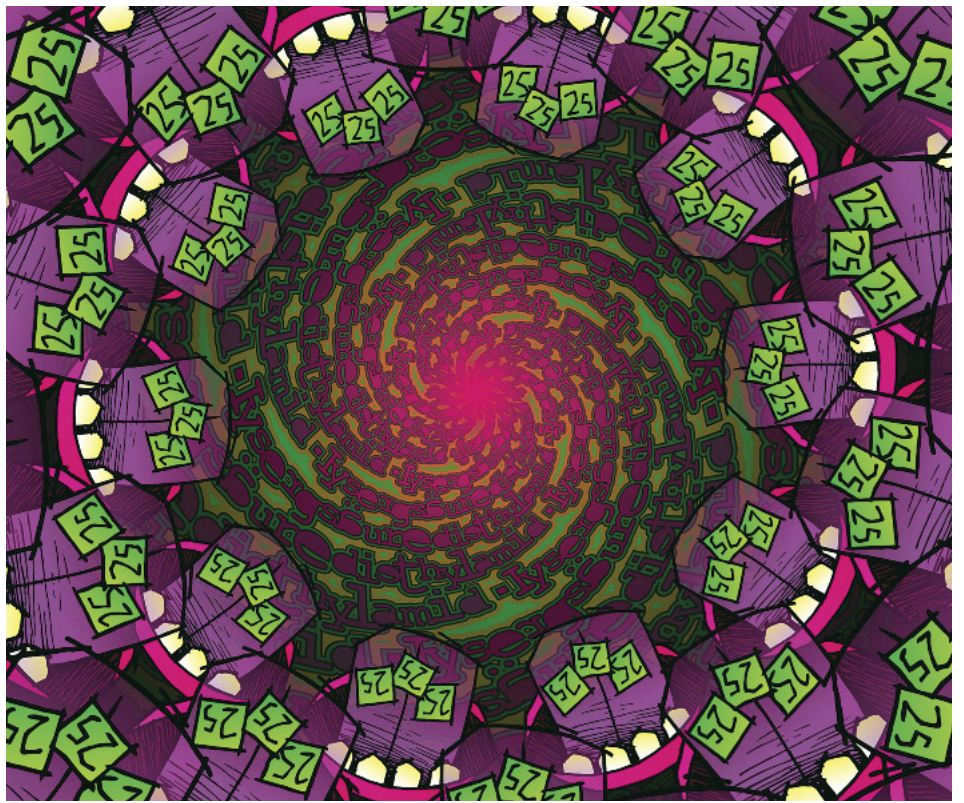


Was your progression a gradual process or a sudden urge?

I would say both. The idea of the double back popped up as a vision. A dream. Out of nothing. Maybe it was a stupid idea. Or whatever. But after a while thinking about it, it became a reality. I needed five long sessions over a few months to finish my first double back but now, after doing fifteen of them, I can do them in just three sessions over a few days. My first four-person piece took 33 hours over four days; the four-person swastika took us only 17 hours over two days. My clients usually travel a long way – they come from all over the world, and I'm in the middle of nowhere in the countryside – so working faster means I have more opportunity to bring projects to fruition.

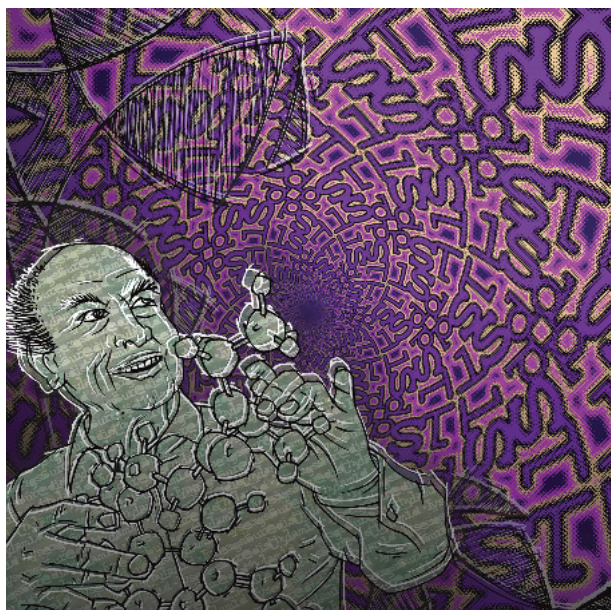
Your tattooing has massive energy. How has that evolved?

I try not to live too much in our 'tattoo society'. I don't really read magazines or follow other tatuists. Most of my creativity and inspiration comes from travels, rituals and psychedelic experiences (which inspire my whole way of living and thinking, as well as my art). My idea is to take tatuing as far away from tatuing as I can! Hmm. I try to create something on a body by using the shape of the body and playing with it. The first impression may be that the placement is absurd. The design should make people question whether my work is tatued or painted or whatever. I like the idea of making a tatu not look like a tatu. And yeah, size does matter. Going big and keeping it simple. Massive, but with a balance between boldness and detail. And for sure, I always try to kill as much skin as I can. I don't like tatus that have lots of negative skin.

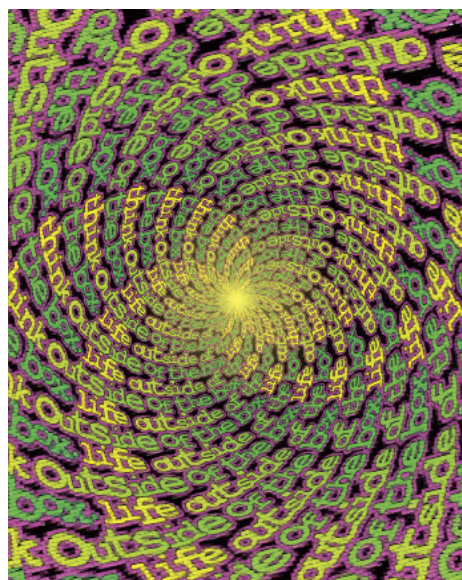


Tell us more about your philosophy of art and your life.

For me, art and life are one and the same thing. My art is the part of my world that I create. In a way it's a mirror of my mind, but as I live and travel a lot in my mind - in my own world - it's hard to tell the difference... Love is life. My love is my passion for life, for my art, for what I do, for the things I create. And all of this gives me life. It is my life. It's one repeating thing. When you put your full heart and mind into something, it will grow and rise and give you more than if you do things half-heartedly and for the wrong reasons.



I've had a lot dreams and visions about tatuing. I have made most of them a reality. I don't give a shit about money when something comes to me in a vision. In the past I have tatued a lot for free, or for very low prices, when I have wanted to realise something that I have in my head. I still do the same with bigger projects, so that I can find people who are willing to give me the opportunity to do what I do. Today, our tatu society is all about fame, money and the mainstream. It's easier than ever to make a fast buck and get famous and shit like that. I miss the love, the lifestyle, the heart in tatuing. People who live the life for real reasons, instead of all those untatued tatuists with their fancy rotaries who know nothing about the roots of tatuing, about the spirit tatuing once had from its ritualistic, tribal side or its subcultural side. Tatuing these days is what it is. It's fashion. It's mainstream. And everyone who supports it is part of it.



Can you talk us through the swastika multi-body tattoo?

The full piece got tatued over seventeen hours in two days as part of my Kritzel Krazel exhibition in Konstanz, Germany. Most of the tattooing took place in private, but for the last half hour of the day we overlapped with the opening hours of the exhibition. This was the second time (my Amenra project was the first) that I'd let people see a big tattoo like this in progress and share the feeling of standing in front of a tattoo that spreads over four entire backpieces.

The swastika design was kind of spontaneous. I'd always wanted to make the biggest swastika tatu. So I made a rough design. A few days later I had four people, and the rest was easy. After working with a team of artists to tatu ten people, this was simple. Tatuing only four people is not such a big thing anymore. As you gain experience of larger projects, you start doing things differently. Specifically, for me, the designing and painting part of it. How I group the people together, how I freehand my design, all these things. Also, how me and my crew work together. I now know heaps of tricks to make things easier. And with every project I gain more experience, and more new tricks and ideas. More progression.





About the session. Ever since I started doing double backs, I've loved this kind of session. It gets more and more like a trip together. Like we're all experiencing one thing. Friends suffering together. Laughing, crying, and so on. With the bigger projects, the clients mostly don't know each other beforehand. But it doesn't take long to become friends. Getting a full back done like this in just a few days is a ritual. All the pain, and all for one tatu. Everyone holds it together. And when I work with my crew you have a session way too crazy to explain. Tatuing in different workspaces, but always in one room. Mostly very close. Sometimes two people tatuing on one back. Sometimes switching over. Anything can happen. It's very far from being me tatuing a back; it's *us* tatuing a big piece. I love it. And when the tatu is done, the relief. But I always wait at least a day before I look at the complete finished piece - so that the tatu can dry, and so that open wounds don't come into contact with each other. We normally have helpers to clean the clients' skin in between, and if you'd ever worked with sixteen people in one room (creating one tatu) you'd understand why. Even if you keep everyone separate, people are messy and it would just be stupid to say there was absolutely no risk of cross-contamination.





The next day when everyone comes back for the final pictures you can see the excitement. They've had a full back done, but they still can't see the final tatu. And then that first sneak preview on the small screen... Goosebump moments! There are tears and laughter from all of us. It takes our breath away. It's a crazy feeling when you see such a big piece in front of you, knowing this may be the only time the elements are united. That's why I started to integrate some of my projects into exhibitions. So that I could give people who are interested in seeing something like this the chance to share this moment for real.

How do the clients feel about being one of four, an element of a larger creation?

They have only 25% of the tatu on their back, but they have 100% of the experience. 100% of the session. 100% of something so absurd that you can hardly put it into words. I'm always very thankful that I can find people who share my vision and who make it possible for me to realise my projects.

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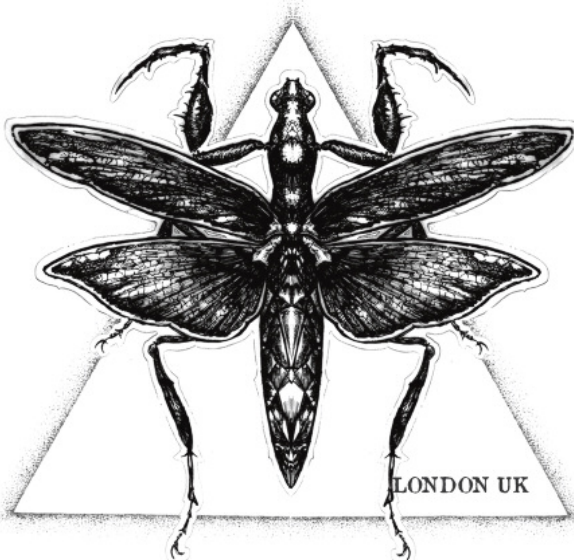
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INTERNATIONAL BRUSSELS TATTOO CONVENTION

1. live two, giahi tattoo (switzerland)
2. flo, watervast custom tattoo (holland)
3. andy davies, vintage tattoo (holland)
4. jean pierre mottin, grizzly ink (belgium)
5. maks kornev (russia)
6. art by custom kings
7. moaning cities
8. carlo formisano, indelebile (italy)
9. fabi,o moro morotattoo (italy)
10. jurena (germany)
11. kreatyves (germany)
12. polo tattooer (france)
13. willemxsm (holland)



The Brussels Tattoo Convention is a show that's on the up. Since we first visited in 2013, it's grown year after year. For the 2015 incarnation the artist count had risen to around 350 and the list of entertainers had also swelled in numbers and variety. One thing that hasn't changed is the venue, which is hardly surprising as it is fantastic and swallows up this huge event effortlessly.

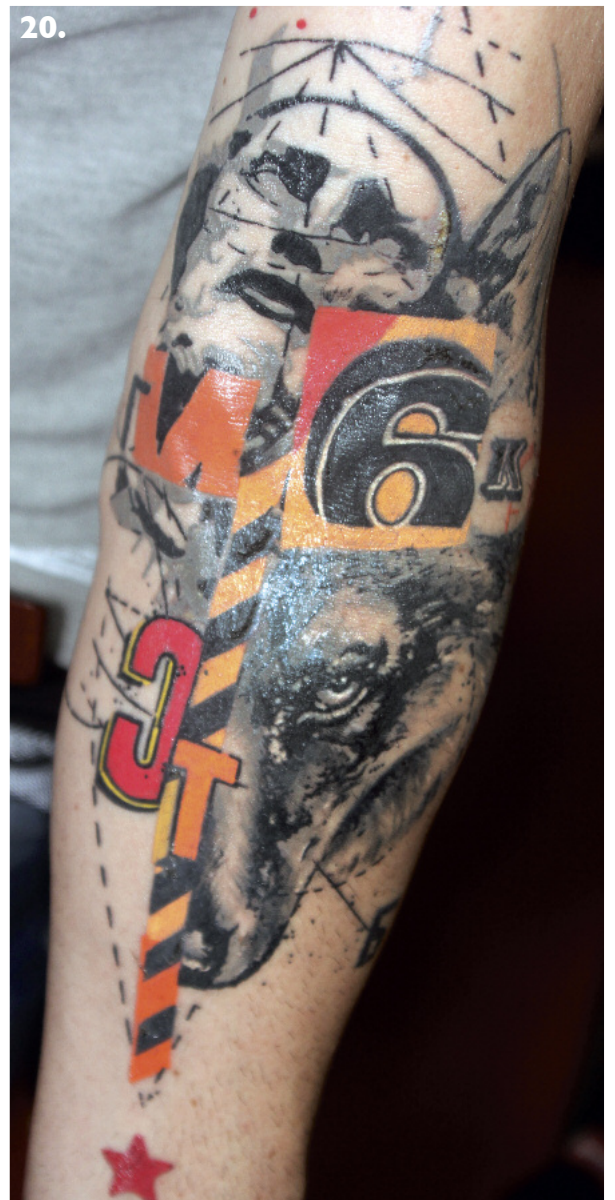
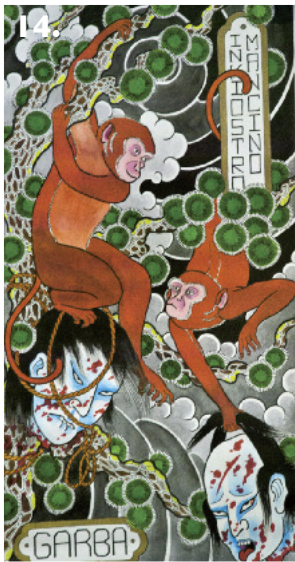
The curiously named Tour & Taxis is a massive area filled with renovated warehouses dating from the early 19th century when Brussels was a major shipping hub. It's rich with the evocative industrial style of that period. The show takes over two enormous red brick halls, and the wrought-iron and glass ceiling floods the space with plenty of natural light, making it great for tattooing. One hall is filled with artists and the other is home to the traders, the main stage and an interesting selection of slightly curious but entertaining performances (definitely not the usual convention fodder... but more of that later).

The show runs over three days and doesn't pause for breath from the moment the doors open to the moment they close. It's fun, fast and at times a bit furious but you can dip in and out depending on what you fancy. As you would expect, tattooing is the main focus. There was a fantastic spread of artists encompassing every style; no single genre was dominant but what stood out was the 'graphic' style that is so prominent around

Europe right now. At a UK show, you might have a handful of artists who have mastered this style; in this part of mainland Europe, where most of its innovators hail from, it's far more established.

The entertainment at the Brussels show continued almost non-stop and was certainly a mixed bag, including burlesque, aerial shows, bands and a good old freak show, not forgetting the Fuel Girls on Sunday. My personal favorite? It was a toss-up between the Globe of Death – four guys riding motorcycles round and round inside a spherical mesh ball, looping vertically and horizontally at speeds of over 40mph – and the wrestling. Yes, you heard right, wrestling. And UK-style, not WWE. I was instantly transported back to 1975: World of Sport, Big Daddy versus the mysterious masked Kendo Nagasaki. (In case you don't know what I am talking about, check out this video from '75, showing the moment when Kendo was unmasked, revealing his tattooed head (www.youtube.com/watch?v=vm3t5IecZJI))







- 14. garba (italy)
- 15. classic car show
- 16. art 4 life (holland)
- 17. jak connolly
- 18. sile sanda
- 19. bonel, on the road (argentina)
- 20. jef palumbo, boucherie moderne (belgium)
- 21. alema, tattoo art (italy)
- 22. peppo, massive tattoo (germany)
- 23. damian górski, rock 'n' roll tattoo (poland)
- 24. damian górski, rock 'n' roll tattoo (poland)
- 25. rodrigo galvez, sailor and saints (switzerland)
- 26. uncl paul, ironbrush tattoo (greece)



Brussels is a great convention to have a good nose about, check out some crazy entertainment and some even crazier architecture, and discover some new names to add to your Instagram or just have a nice conversation with. The show is fantastic value for money, with the price on the door just €15. The only real disappointment of the weekend was the food. If you are asking people to stay all day and drink, it would be good to have a decent selections of things to eat too.

Away from the convention, the city of Brussels is well worth closer inspection too, whether you wander through the fascinating side streets, head towards the breathtaking central square or take a trip to the awesome, beautifully bonkers architectural wonder that is the Atomium. It's not the most expensive city in Europe either, especially if you stay via Airbnb like we did. So if you are tempted by the Brussels Tattoo Convention, just book it. You won't regret it.



27.



28.



29.

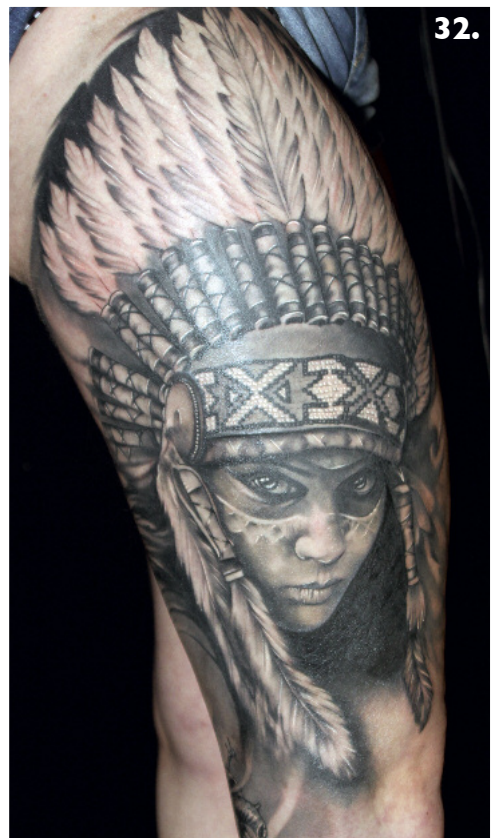
27. the flying muses
 28. theodor brezetos, theo tattoo (greece)
 29. jakub hendrix golebiewski, inkpire tattoo
 30. you can't leave your car anywhere!
 31. carlo formisano, indeleble tattoo (italy)
 32. glen carloss, ladies and gentlemen tattoo studio
 33. tofi, ink-ognito tattoo (poland)
 34. paolo altomare (belgium)
 35. two falls and a submission
 36. people got really hungry
 37. john reardon, green point tattoo (usa)
 38. lord insanity
 39. mirel, mirel tattoo art gallery (germany)
 40. nano lucarelli, tinta mia (spain)



30.

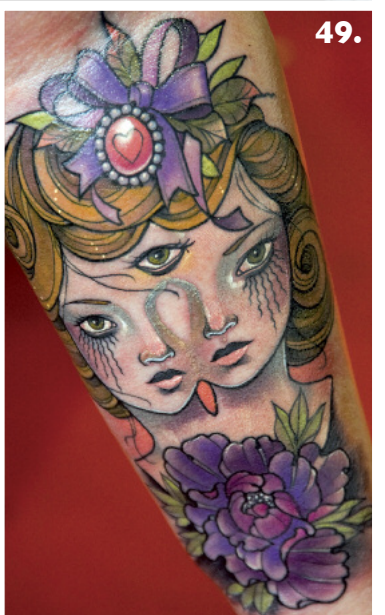
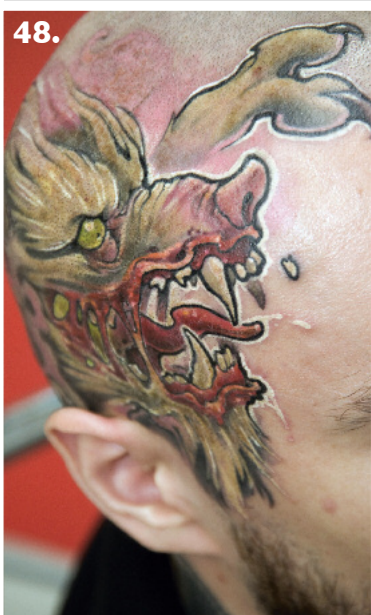


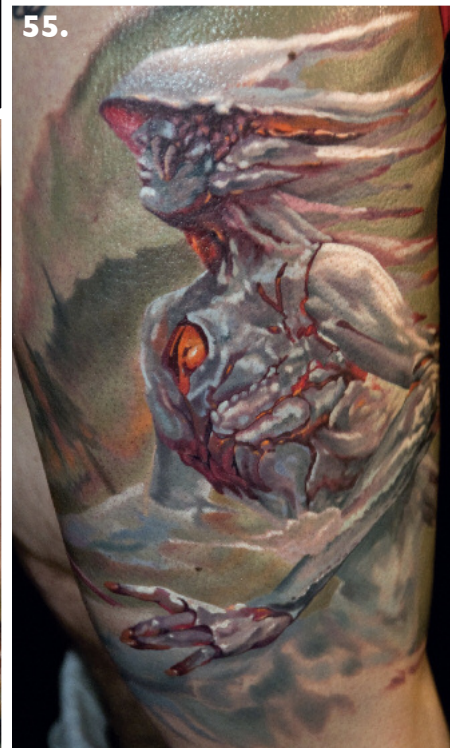
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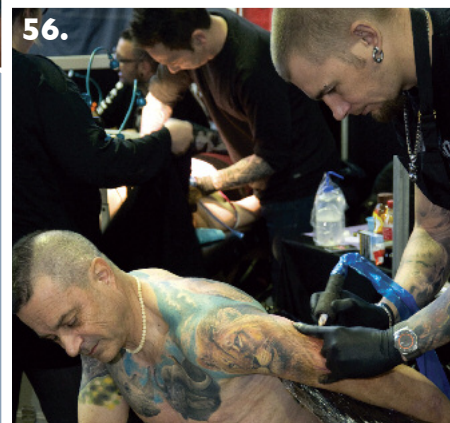






41. uncl paul,
ironbrush tattoo (greece)
42. dynoz artattack crew (greece)
43. surf's up
44. more cool cars
45 & 46. emy,
black sheep tattoo (france)
47. fede gas, giah tattoo
(switzerland)
48. gino fuchs, knisterfuchs
(germany)

49. deborah cherrys,
la mujer barbuda (spain)
50. jamie ris, dogstar tattoo (holland)
51. samuel sancho,
wanted tattoo (spain)
52. friday, vannen (brussels)
53. paul talbot,
the modern electric tattoo co
(switzerland)
54. maks kornev (russia)
55. emrah köse, kronik tattoo (turkey)
56. maks kornev tattooing





tattoo by nick whybrow



In this third extract from his personal travel diary, tattooist Nick Whybrow comes to the end of his epic four thousand mile European road trip. His final two guest spots are at People's Art in Denmark and Salon Serpent in the Netherlands. After five weeks on the road he's used to living out of bags and saying goodbye every few days, but he's sick and tired of getting rained on...

Hi readers. I'm in Denmark, on my way to Copenhagen, and guess what? The sky is looking ominous. AGAIN! Travelling further and further north, I've not had much luck on the weather front. In fact I've almost reached the point where riding my motorbike isn't fun any more. It's really starting to become a chore. I feel a little defeated admitting this, because for me one of the biggest parts of this trip was to ride through the sunshine and enjoy the summer. But it's been grey and rainy most of the time.



tattoo by nick whybrow

The ride from Germany to Denmark passed by in a wet and windy haze, with only the sea crossing – on a ten-mile long bridge – being worthy of a mention. The bridge was interrupted by a small island with some cows on it and a lighthouse which, despite the rain, was an idyllic sight. Unfortunately there was nowhere for me to stop to take a photograph. I'd have loved to share it with you. The rest of Denmark rolled uneventfully by, with grey clouds and yet more rain, and eventually I made it to Copenhagen where I was to spend the week with my friends Yana and Kiley (who works at Le Fix Tattoo). I hauled all my gear off the bike and upstairs into their flat and got out of my dripping clothing, feeling really glad I'd bought those expensive waterproofs back in Milan.



copenhagen



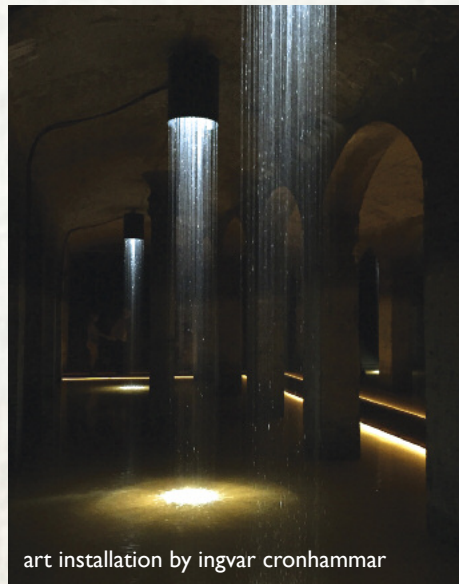
art installation by ingvar cronhammar

PART THREE

ON THE ROAD WITH NICK WHYBROW

Words and photos
Nick Whybrow

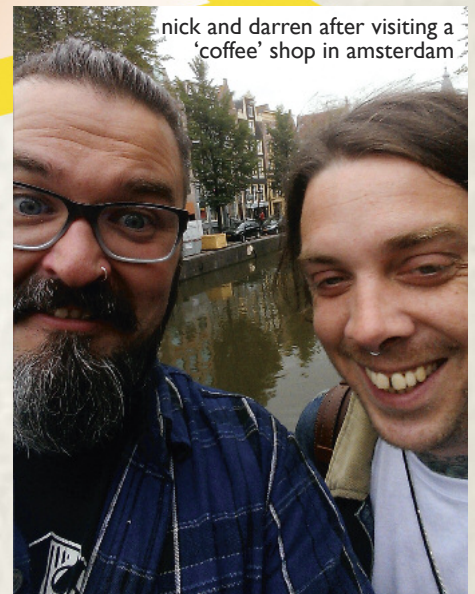
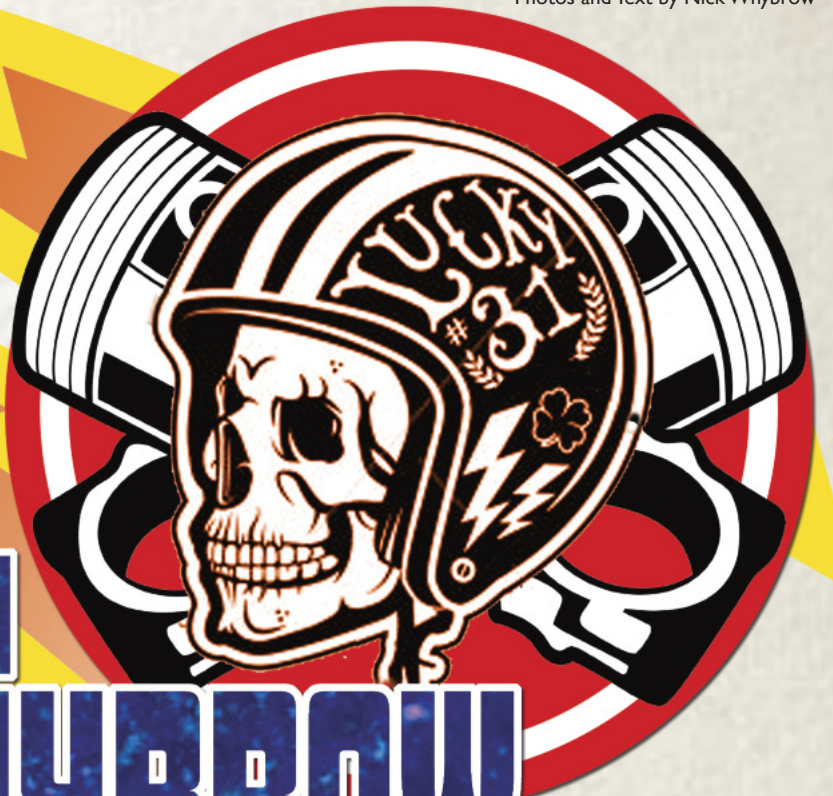
It was nice to have a couple of days off before starting work at People's Art, and I have to tell you about an art installation we went to see. It was by Ingyar Cronhammer and it was in an old disused underground reservoir, in Söndermarken Park. It was an awesome sight to behold. The floor was about four or five inches deep in water, with an eerily-lit walkway just above the surface. The only other light was from twenty eight columns of falling water, which gave it the feel of a cave with water cascading from cracks between the rocks. All the while choir music quietly played in the background, overlaid by occasional whispering. It was spectacularly beautiful, creepy and haunting all at the same time.



art installation by ingyar cronhammer

On my first day at People's Art I got there late because of problems on the metro. Not a great first impression, but luckily nobody seemed to mind. Adam who owns the shop introduced me to Johnny, Kasper, and my first appointment Mette (who happens to be a good friend of everybody at People's Art, and so felt fine about hanging out and waiting for me to show up). We'd decided to figure out the design on the day, so we spent the first couple of hours talking about it, finding a reference and drawing it up. We settled on a Viking woman's head, with another woman and a swan coming out of the cut-off top. The next few hours of tattooing and getting to know people at the shop flew past, then when the shop closed we all went out for dinner and drinks, along with my friend Elliot who tattoos at a shop nearby.

On my second day at People's Art I made sure I wasn't late. I managed to get to the shop early and set up before Katherine, my appointment for the day, got there. I even had time to squeeze in a chat with Adam the owner. I got on well with him and everybody else in the shop. It's a nice relaxed place. Some shops on this trip have made me feel like a cog in a money-making machine – working for someone who doesn't care about me and maybe hasn't even met me. That's definitely not the case here. Everybody at People's Art rides motorbikes and hangs out together, and that feeling of family makes for a much more inspiring and productive work environment.



nick and darren after visiting a 'coffee' shop in amsterdam



adam, people's art

I'd arranged with Katherine via e-mail that I would do one of my pre-drawn designs. She chose a skull with a sunflower growing through it. This was one of my favourites and I couldn't wait to finally tattoo it. I was especially flattered to learn that she and her boyfriend had come all the way from Brussels (where they live) just so that Katherine could get tattooed. I was excited about the following day's tattoo as well, which was a line drawing of Henry Rollins. I had a great time tattooing it – and with that, my guest spot at People's Art was over.

Amsterdam was my next destination, for my guest spot at Salon Serpent. The shitty weather was now really wearing me down, and I'll even admit that there were times on this section of the journey when I wished I was travelling by car. For some unknown reason I remained optimistic that the rain would hold off until I reached my overnight stop. How wrong I was. The sun came out to tease me, but ten minutes later it was raining yet again. I tried to influence the weather by talking to it inside my crash helmet. First I tried to reason with it, then I got angry with it, then I tried some pitiful pleading. Eventually I came to the conclusion that I couldn't control it with my mind and was being stupid even trying. You've heard of snow blindness. Well I think I was suffering from rain insanity! Luckily the sodden miles passed relatively quickly. The only noteworthy event was when I came across what seemed to be a Norton owners' club out on an excursion and got to have a look at their awesome bikes. Other than that all I could see was rain.



tattoo by nick whybrow

Manuel's tattoo. I'd had a good response from people wanting to get tattooed while I was in Amsterdam, but in typically me fashion I'd not organised myself very well and had squeezed in more appointments than I could comfortably do in the time I had. But who wants to have lunch breaks anyway? So it was on a growling stomach that I set up for Menno, my next customer, who was also a first-timer. Manuel had been pretty nervous, but Menno was quite the opposite and over the next couple of hours I tattooed an anatomical heart with a mandala. Menno had brought his mum along, and they both seemed to really enjoy the experience of being in a tattoo shop. A lot of photos were taken for the family album! Then just as I was clearing away my station for the evening, my friend Darren Ditton (a tattooer from back home who was over in Amsterdam for the weekend) showed up. We went out with Toby for the evening and it was a lovely way round off my first day.



toby gowler, salon serpent



amsterdam



tattoo by nick whybrow

But the next morning, as I set off on the last leg of my journey, it wasn't raining. And it didn't rain for the whole ride. IT DIDN'T RAIN! I was overjoyed! I could see blue sky through the clouds. Suddenly the scenery seemed so much brighter and more beautiful, and I was experiencing all the enjoyment I'd been missing over the last few weeks.

I spent my first day in Amsterdam lazing in bed. Riding thousands of miles and constantly getting rained on (with all the late nights and hard work in between) was finally taking its toll. In the evening, I managed to drag myself out to get my hair cut and my beard shaped into a fancy new style by my friend Simon at Haar Barbaar on Wolvenstraat. If you're ever in Amsterdam and you're a man (sorry ladies, this is a male-only barber shop) you should go and find him and get him to spruce up your head.

On my first day at Salon Serpent, only Saskia (the manager) and Toby (who I know from his guest spots at Jayne Doe) were working. I didn't mind this at all because it was a nice easy introduction to a shop that I hold in very high regard. My day began with Manuel who was having a tattoo of a trumpet on his thigh – his first – and then before I knew it my next appointment arrived, just as I was finishing up

The next morning I got to the shop early and had more time to take in my surroundings. I hadn't paid much attention to the flash on the walls the previous day, and it was really nice to see that the majority of it was hand-painted by Salon Serpent artists, which made me feel both inspired (to do more painting myself) and lazy (because I don't). I also wanted to say a proper hello to Angelique Houtkamp. We'd met briefly at the Brighton Convention, but I was a little nervous about seeing her again because she's a tattooist I've looked up to for a long time. I always feel nervous about meeting artists that I admire because I'm afraid they might turn out to have a bad attitude, or be hard work to talk to, and then I'd be disappointed and wouldn't ever be able to see their work in the same light again. I know I should be able to appreciate the art regardless of the person, but I can't help it. It's just how I am. I'm happy to say, however, that Angelique was very friendly and level-headed and made me feel right at home.



jonny rhodes, slacking off!

My customer, Stefan, turned up bang on time and we got started with his tattoo. I'd drawn a crow's skull with a castle protruding from a cutaway section at the top that I'd been particularly looking forward to tattooing. It was Stefan's idea, but he'd left it to me to decide how to interpret it. That's my favourite way to work, and I was really pleased with the outcome. Then I had some time to watch Toby working on a stunning black and grey piece of a sailor and lady on a guy's forearm before my next customer, Linh, arrived. She was filling the slot left by a last-minute cancellation, so we discussed and drew up her design on the spot. It was a small tattoo of a simple feather shape fragmented to look almost like broken glass. The next morning was pretty stressful for me.



jonny rhodes, outside peoples art

I had three appointments booked in, and I'd intended to get up early and do the drawings for two of them. I managed the getting up early part, but when I went to do the drawing part I realised that I'd left all of my drawing stuff at the shop. Three appointments in one day would have been ambitious even if I'd been prepared – but now that I wasn't, I was starting to sweat. So I decided to go to the shop first thing to get at least one drawing done before my appointments arrived, but I'd forgotten that it was Salon Serpent's 'walk-in Saturday'... and I got there to find a long queue of people waiting outside! The shop wasn't yet open, so I went to the café over the road and spent half an hour waiting for an egg on toast only to cancel the order when I spotted Saskia arriving (the chef showing no sign of putting an egg into a frying pan anytime soon). I managed to do one drawing before Bart, my first appointment, arrived.

Bart wanted one of my pre-drawn designs but wasn't sure which to choose. After looking through all my drawings, he decided on a bearded man's head with a naked androgynous owl-headed figure and sword coming out of a



tattoo by nick whybrow

cutaway at the top. (What can I say? I draw weird things if you leave me to my own devices!) Unfortunately Bart and I weren't able to have much of a conversation while I was tattooing him because I was working on the back of his leg and he was laying down facing away from me, but this gave me an opportunity to carry on thinking and come up with a better idea for my next customer's tattoo – an improvement on the Grim Reaper design I'd drawn up that morning. When Johnny arrived I took a few minutes to explain the new idea to him and he seemed really into it, so I got out my pencils and pens, re-drew it, then got to work tattooing it. My final customer was Johnny's girlfriend Sarah, and by the time I started her tattoo of a peony everyone else at the shop had finished their walk-ins for the day. But nobody was in a



tattoo by nick whybrow

hurry to go anywhere, so it wasn't a big deal that I was running late and even after I had finished we all hung around and had a beer or two.

A couple of days after that I was packing up my stuff for the last time and getting ready for the journey home. I strapped my bags to the bike, said my goodbyes and set off for the ferry. It was a dry day, and there was even some SUNSHINE, which was a nice change. I'd had a great time in Amsterdam, so I was glad not to be leaving on a rainy and sour note.

So there we are, readers. That's the final instalment of my summer tour diary. It was an intense seven-week, 3909-mile trip which had some real highs and lows. I wouldn't change any of it, but – with the benefit of hindsight – if I were to do it again I'd do it differently. Here's my advice to anyone planning a similar trip:

1. Take more underwear and fewer t-shirts
2. Take a good toolkit and lots of spare nuts and bolts
3. Prepare but don't prepare too much. Part of the fun is in the unknown and the experiences that life just throws at you.

I'm writing this from my parents' home in Suffolk, a week and half after completing my epic journey. It feels really strange not to be living out of bags and saying goodbye to everyone every few days. In a way it's nice, but I'm already missing the excitement of being on the road! Thanks for reading, and I hope you all enjoyed me waffling on.

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instagram @nick_whybrow

This month's cover model is Airica. She is passionate about personal growth, awesome hair and quality tattoos, but not so passionate about the pain involved in getting her chest piece...

How would you describe yourself?

I'm a motivated young woman who has come to be known for having quality tattoos and awesome hair. I graduated college with my Bachelors in psychology and plan on attending grad school to obtain my Masters in counselling so I can be a therapist.

When did you decide that you wanted to be a heavily tattooed woman?

I don't think I ever decided to be heavily tattooed. It just happened as I continued to want more artwork. Being so small physically means you get covered quite quickly!

What was your first tattoo and how do you feel about it now?

The heart outlines on my back. I got something extremely basic and out of sight, to see how I would feel about having tattoos. A week later I got my next tattoo, so I guess you could say I was pleased with the outcome. I still like my first tattoos as they look the same as when I got them. I deliberately got something simple so I wouldn't change my mind about it later.

Do you have a theme to your tattoos?

I have a lot of roses and animals, so I suppose that is a theme. Everything on my left sleeve (except for my dad's name) is related to Japan: Sailor Moon, Nintendo, Neko and so on.

Any favourite tattoos among your collection?

I have lots of favourites because I have so many quality pieces. Some of the ones I like best are Princess Peach, Sailor Neptune, my white tiger and my chest piece.

What inspired your 'tea time' chest piece?

A lot of people think it has to do with Alice in Wonderland, but actually it has nothing to do with that. I have drunk tea

my entire life and I wanted a fancy teapot tattoo. I decided to include a clock so it would translate as 'Time for Tea' and I added roses because that's a running theme in my tattoo collection. The time on the clock is 6:56, the time I was born.

What was your most painful tattoo?

Getting the middle of my chest coloured was probably the worst. The entire chest was pretty awful though.

Do you help design your tattoos or do you rely more on your artist?

I come up with the idea and give my artist references and have them draw the piece. I can't draw to save my life, so I leave that to the artist.

Is your family supportive of your tattoos, and have they always been?

My mother respects my autonomy as a person and, although she wishes I had fewer tattoos, she is not unsupportive of my decisions.

Have you had any negative experiences because of the amount of ink you have?

Only on the Internet where people think they need to share opinions like 'Too many tattoos' or 'What will you look like when you're older?' Most people don't have the guts to say anything to my face.

Any plans for more ink?

For now, I've got everything I've wanted done. I may get my hands and/or my throat tattooed later in life.

How would you describe your overall style?

Of my tattoos? Traditional/neo-traditional. How I dress? Typically whatever is comfortable. I own too many pairs of black pants and leggings, and usually team them up with a tank top or hoodie.

What inspires your colourful hair?

I just get bored with my appearance and happen to have a best friend who is a hair stylist, so I can change my hair all the time.

Are there any models or artists that inspire you?

Kelly Eden is an amazing artist. I love her 'Sweets' series.

How did you get into modelling?

I started modelling using the modelmayhem.com website. I used it to find photographers and build my portfolio.

Do you have any advice for new models trying to break into the industry?

Don't let anyone else decide on your appearance or what kind of jobs you'll do. Being true to yourself is the most important aspect, because you'll never be happy being someone you're not.

Tell us about your social media following.

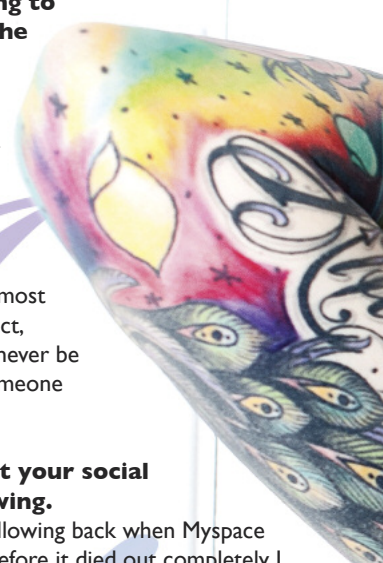
I had a large following back when Myspace was relevant. Before it died out completely I had over 300,000 friends. My Instagram and Facebook pages gained a large following rather quickly, but I have no idea why. My Facebook page has grown by ten or twenty thousand 'likes' per week since June 2014 and continues to grow. I think having awesome hair and tattoos is the reason I have such a large following.

What are you most passionate about?

Learning and growing. I love becoming a more intelligent, well-rounded person. There is always something that can be learned or improved upon throughout your life, which allows for goals to be set and achieved.

What exciting things can we expect from you in the future?

Definitely more fun and different hair!



Airica Michelle

COVER MODEL PROFILE

Pictures & interview Jenna Kraczek



James Lovegrove

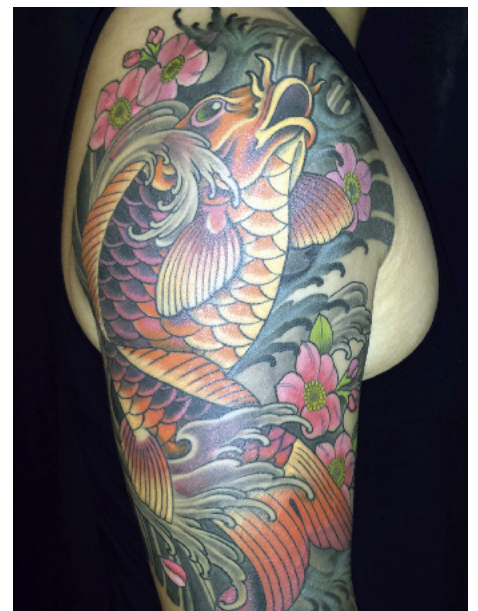
Interview by Lizzy Guy
Pictures by James Lovegrove

Born and bred in London, James Lovegrove creates large-scale, oriental-style tattoos that are colourful, bright, and instantly recognisable. This attention to detail extends to his work in black and grey, and more recently, dotwork. I spoke to him in between clients at the Bristol Tattoo Convention.

I began by asking James about his journey into tattooing. "I worked in advertising (after doing a degree in it) but I hated everything about that industry," he tells me. "At the time I was getting tattooed by Dan Gold, who I'd known for several years. An opportunity came up to work in one of his shops and he suggested that I tried it. So I did and I immediately fell in love with it."

Although unhappy with his original advertising career path, James feels that the experience, and the need to change, motivated him to work hard at learning to tattoo. "I knew what a good opportunity it was, so I didn't want to fuck about. I never set out to be a 'rock star'; I learned to tattoo because I love it. It stands you in good stead if you can avoid the pitfalls of the tattoo 'scene'. There was a point, in the first couple of years, when I thought I could do everything... then I realised that I was shit! *[laughs]* I had to pull my socks up, figure out where I was lacking, and generally carry on working hard."

After his time with Dan Gold, James worked in a couple of other London shops before joining Into You in 2009. The vacancy came about after the tragic death of Jason Saga. I was curious to know whether there was any additional pressure – from the shop, co-workers or customers – to fill Jason's shoes? "I knew Jason really well; he was the kind of guy that people really looked up to, both for his humble personal approach and his work ethic. But he couldn't be replaced; he was a one-off. If you go into that sort of situation trying to emulate someone, or if anyone expects you to do that, then you're destined to fail. There was never any expectation in the shop that I would do his style of work, or take his clients on. I was filling the seat, not filling the shoes."





Having been at Into You for six years, and tattooing for over ten years, James acknowledges that other artists and studios have influenced and motivated him too. This has helped him focused on developing his work and has kept him grounded. "I've been really fortunate in that I've worked with good people. Not just good artists; *good people*. I was at Sacred Art in Stoke Newington before Into You and they were really nurturing. Into You is an incredible place too. Everyone is so supportive and you've got the freedom to figure out who you are as a tattooist, whilst making sure that work comes through the door. There's so many years of experience wrapped up in the shop, even from those artists who have gone off to do their own thing. You really get that buzz, just by being in the studio. Some of the best artists in the world pass through the shop. They bring new ideas, new ways of working, technical innovations, fresh attitudes and years of knowledge. It's a privilege to be in that environment.



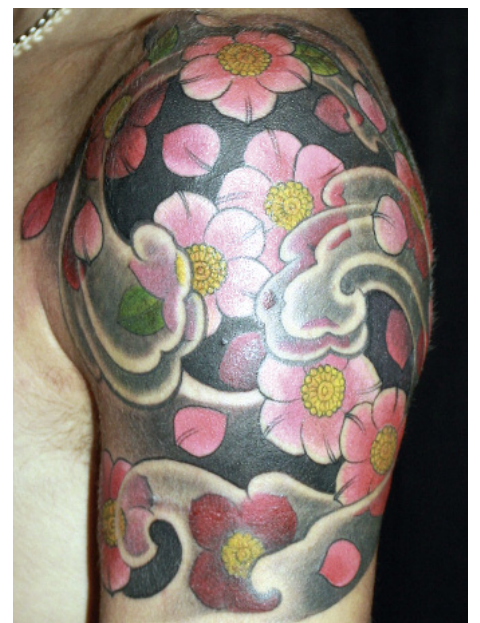




“Running a business is difficult and we’re all lucky that Alex Binnie does it so well. As artists, we’re all taken care of. We don’t have to think of much apart from tattooing. I realise how lucky I am, that I can just concentrate on tattooing. When a person has to do both, there’s a lot more pressure, although a good support network helps. But saying that, I’m really happy that someone else is The Boss!”

Working hard and staying focused has paid off for James. He has developed a wonderful, colourful style of tattooing which, in some ways, one could describe as ‘New-School Japanese’. “I fell in love with big colour work through Japanese art, through Jason Saga’s work and through the greats of Japanese tattooing; they’re massively influential, and that’s what drew me in. There are so many people who have travelled to the East and studied the intricacies of Japanese tattooing, but I’m not one of them. I’m not bound to the ‘rules’ of being a traditionalist. The more I tattoo, the more confident I am at being able to take on a subject and treat it as my own. I’m not Japanese and I don’t understand the culture or nuances enough to be respectfully considered as a Japanese tattooist. But I love the history and I love the pantheon of images, composition and way of integrating a narrative into the work.

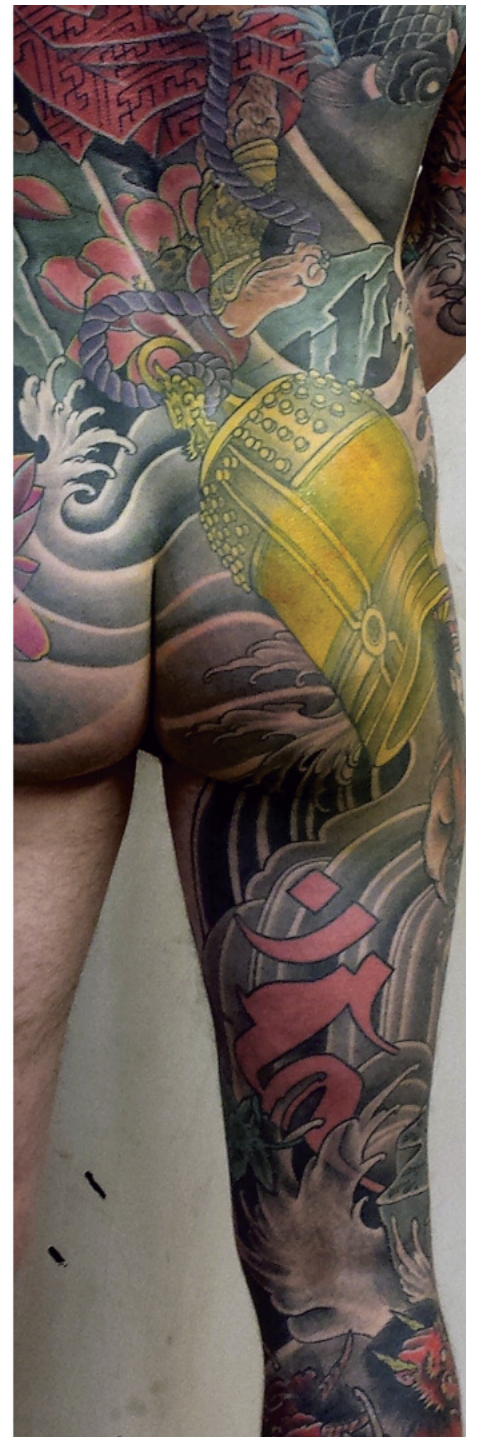
“I enjoy getting ideas from my clients and treating them in my own way. I also like to do geometric dotwork; it’s a nice break for the hands to do something else! The approach is different, as is the way of tattooing and the customers’ approach, too. It’s nice to have a couple of different styles. In the future, I’d like to work on combining the two.”





Some of the artists at Into You are renowned for their use of solid black and for the geometric patterns in their work. I wondered if working alongside them had sparked James' interest in this style. "It opened my eyes to what can be achieved. Dotwork and geometric styles can be exciting, creating something from scratch, be it on paper or on a computer, and then putting it on the skin. It's also quite liberating that you have no rules or storytelling, it's purely aesthetic. You can concentrate on making a beautiful image without worrying about whether it's got hands or eyes or even if it makes sense. It just needs to look good."

As our conversation drew to a close, I reflected on James' remark about not having done much travelling. I asked him if he had any plans for the future. "I would love to work outside London more, and travel with my tattooing. One of the beneficial things social media has given us is the insight that great tattooing doesn't only happen in major cities of the western world. Through the wonder/horror of Instagram I see some of the most amazing, exciting and truly original work coming from artists who work in tiny villages, remote towns and far flung places. I'd love to work with some of these people and see what I can learn from them. Now my daughter is nearly five and about to start school, it will be easier to take time out to do some guest spots."





There is a common misconception that tattooists have an easy job but this is far from the case. James is clearly so committed to tattooing and works hard to develop his art, I wondered how he managed to balance a job he was so passionate about with his family life. "Tattooing is absolutely not a nine to five job. Balancing work and family isn't easy; it's a challenge and I think it always will be. Tattooing is hard work, as is being a husband and a father; both require a lot of effort, patience, practice, consistency and compromise. I just try to keep it as simple as possible. I love my work but I work for my family. They are the most important thing to me. Family, tattooing then everything else!"

Website: www.jameslovegrovetattoo.com
Instagram: @jameslovegrovetattoo





TALES FROM NAUGHTY STEEP

by Paul Talbot

some cases, a musician's endorsement of a particular instrument has been key to its success or has sparked renewed interest in the instrument by exposing it to a younger audience. Steve Vai and the Ibanez Jem, or Slash and the Gibson Les Paul, come to mind as prime examples. But have you ever seen either of these musicians flying Ibanez or Gibson banners as big as their own logos at their shows? No you haven't. And that's just one of the things we're getting wrong in tattooing.

But surely there's no reason why sponsorships shouldn't be great for tattoo artists, right? Wrong.

As artists we're seen as purveyors of the one thing that is really difficult for a brand to achieve. We're COOL. Capitalism has long known that cool sells, but 'cool' is an accidental quality – an inherently arbitrary attribute – and history is full of examples of brands desperately trying to gain the acceptance of the sub-culture with ill-conceived attempts to appeal to 'the scene.' Brands that want it too much, and end up being marked out as phoney's, or a bunch of try-hards.

So instead they look to piggyback on another brand's cool – and that's us. This can make complete sense; it can be a perfect fit. I'm sponsored by four companies whose products I already used BEFORE they approached me. I can recommend them hand-on-heart and – as I've told them all these companies – if they stopped sponsoring me tomorrow I would continue to buy their products anyway. I've built personal relationships with the owners and intend to work with them long-term instead of jumping on the trend wagon when the latest shiny new bit of kit comes along. I'm happy to endorse them and confident that they're good people who care as much about this shit as I do.

But what if I was sponsored by drinks or clothing brands instead of tattoo supply companies? And what if the tattoo supply companies started adopting the tactics of the major record labels when setting up their sponsorship deals? I'm already seeing corporate thinking creeping into the way tattoo brands deal with artists and – to my way of thinking – that's all kinds of bad. And that's where the downside comes in...

THE DOWNSIDE

I was offered a deal recently that required me to sign a contract in which my responsibilities were listed over two whole pages whereas the brand's commitment to me took up just a single paragraph. I was asked to guarantee that I would behave myself in the tattoo world – like that's ever going to happen. Another deal

Hello again dear readers. This month's column is about sponsorship. It's a contentious and divisive subject in the tattoo world, and I have a very unique and different perspective on it.

Why do I have such a unique perspective? Well firstly, I am not only a tattooist who currently has four sponsorship deals, but I also own a company that makes clipcords (Evolution Cords) and have an interest in a company that makes a solidifying powder (BlkPowder). So I see the business from both sides. I am contacted all the time by companies looking to sponsor me, and by artists asking me to sponsor them. And secondly, I was a professional musician for a number of years – another industry where similar kinds of deals are not only commonplace but often essential to artists' survival and success.

So, let's begin by taking a look at how sponsorship benefits us as artists. Then we'll take a look at the downside...

THE UPSIDE

It's all about free shit, right? Wrong.

A sponsorship deal should be about two businesses getting together for a mutually beneficial outcome. In the case of a sponsorship deal, this usually centres around cross-promotion: "you tell your audience about our product and we'll tell our audience about yours." Inevitably one side 'sweetens' the deal because they have more to gain than the other, and that's where the free shit usually comes in.

Done correctly, sponsorship means that your tattoo artist will be able to recommend their favourite aftercare to you, or tell you why they

think a particular brand of tattoo machine, ink or needle is better (for them) than any another, whilst benefiting from having their work or their image used in advertising campaigns, on the web or in any number of other ways to promote the aforementioned brands. The artist also uses the products at conventions where they are visible to anyone who's interested, and the brand benefits from that. Now we all know that most tattoo artists will do this anyway (we love to talk about tattoo stuff, don't we?) so if the endorsement is genuine why shouldn't an artist reap the rewards of a deal done with a brand that they use anyway?

This is – pretty much – the model employed in the music industry and it works well. In

required me to use every product in the company's range (exclusively), and work in a booth so heavily branded with the product's identity that my own name would have appeared almost as an afterthought, making my booth look identical to the booths of all their other puppets – sorry artists.

In both cases my answer was short and ended in “off”.

The thing that annoyed me the most about both of these deals was the element of “we're doing you a favour” and “if you're with us you're cooler” – and this reminded me again of my time as a professional musician.

Corporate thinking endangers the credibility of musicians trying to pick their way through an industry that has become “a cruel and shallow money trench, a long plastic hallway where thieves and pimps run free, and good men die like dogs.” (*Hunter S Thompson*) The major record labels control what happens in the music business, to the point where talent and ability are the least important things. Brands that would have once been condemned for trying to hijack the subculture have now basically got it by the balls, slapping their logos and slogans all over events, websites and music videos. What's left is a creative wasteland where the idea of cool has been studied and analysed beyond all integrity. Where anything that's exciting becomes something that a brand can jump on. Where the idea of 'selling out' has become almost hilariously archaic. Everything is up for sale and any belief we have in the creators has been diminished beyond all recognition. The record labels have a stranglehold over the artists which, in recent years, has resulted in an exodus. Musicians are leaving the majors in order to reclaim control of their lives and their music, because when business and brands start being in charge of art then it's time to get the fuck out of Dodge.

And this, worryingly, is where I can see tattooing going. Unless we do something about it.

We're the creators. We're the cool that the brands so desperately want. But they've somehow managed to convince us that we need their endorsement – not the other way around. They've turned sponsorship into an accolade, something to be achieved. And in

turn they've started to dictate the terms of the deals, making us – the creatives – servants of capitalism. As if we need them. When in fact they need us far more.

We are the first generation of tattoo artists faced with this problem. We must start to reclaim our place in this two-way deal immediately, otherwise the ripples of this nightmare will be felt by tattoo artists for decades to come. Just ask any musician. They'll tell you that if they could go back to a time when they were in control they wouldn't sell out quite so easily. The short-term gain just isn't worth the long term loss.

The solution is simple, but unpalatable for some: we have to start paying for stuff and investing in the things we think are exciting, and stop chasing deals from companies that offer nothing in return except some free shit. The brands should contact US – not the other way round. If you're chasing brands and hounding them for deals you're doing it wrong.

Yeah, you'll get the deal. But you'll become a travelling salesman, not a respected artist, and your value will be enormously diminished. We have to make brands work harder to gain our endorsements and stand our ground when negotiating these deals by remembering what we are worth to them.

An endorsement deal shouldn't feel like a deal with the devil. If it does, leave.

See you next time - Paul

email me:

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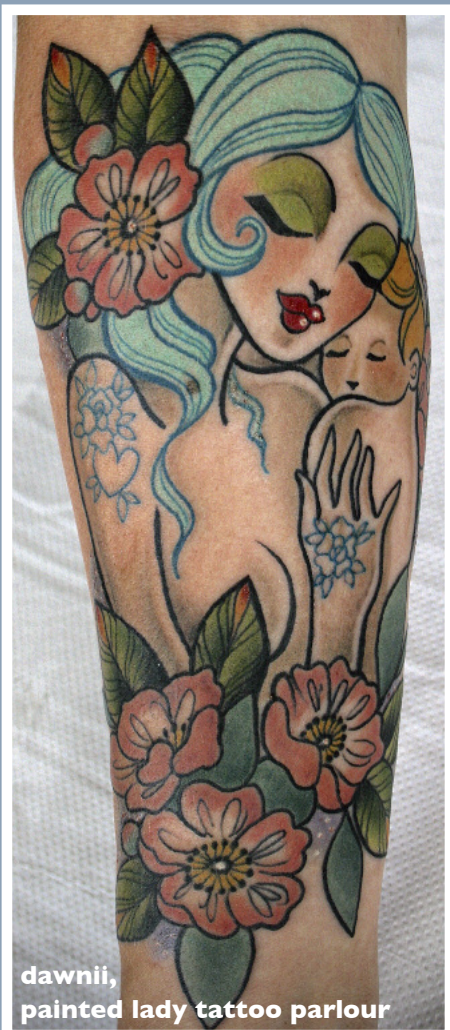
GALLERY



alexandra wilkey,
love hate social club



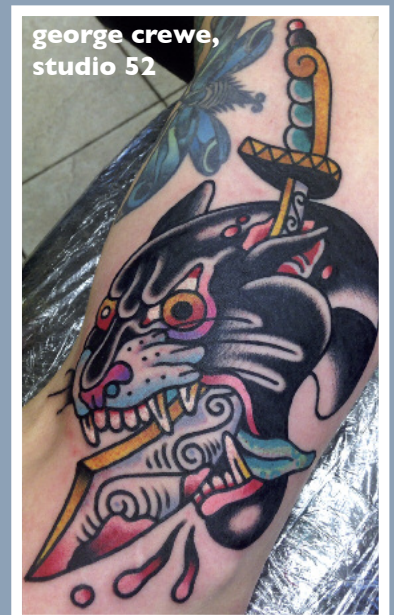
lee dobbs, illustrated primate tattoos



dawnii,
painted lady tattoo parlour



marie, folklore tattoo



george crewe,
studio 52



ivana, ivana tattoo (italy)



adam, folklore tattoo



steven mostyn,
memories & mischief custom tattoo (germany)



martin crosthwaite,
flaming gun tattoo



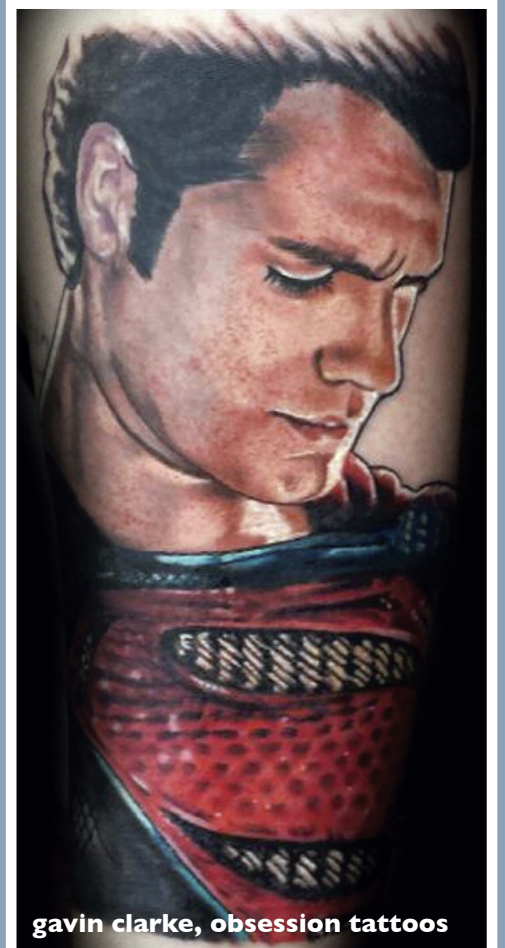
sandor pongor,
pain art tattoo (hungary)



ching, orient ching (taiwan)



steph reed, picture house tattoo



gavin clarke, obsession tattoos



rory craig. northern glory



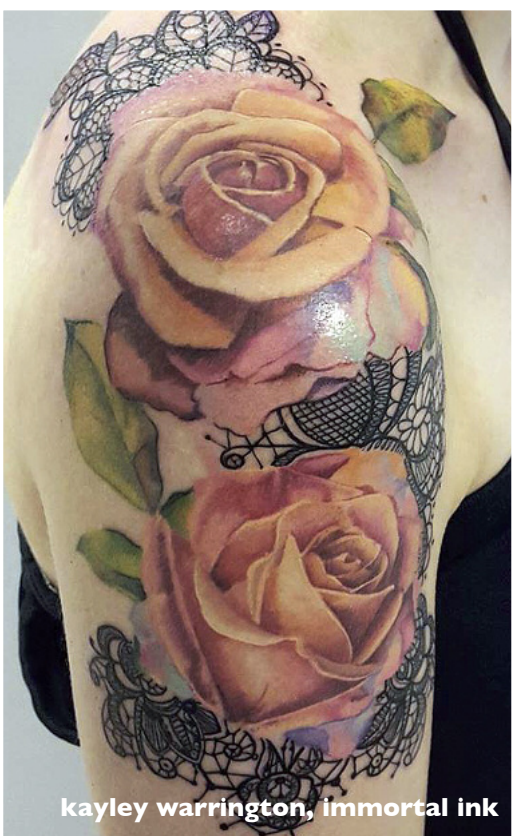
scott mundy, tattoo x (usa)



filipa silva's (portugal)



tom barnard, studio 1060



kayley warrington, immortal ink



toni moore, forever bound



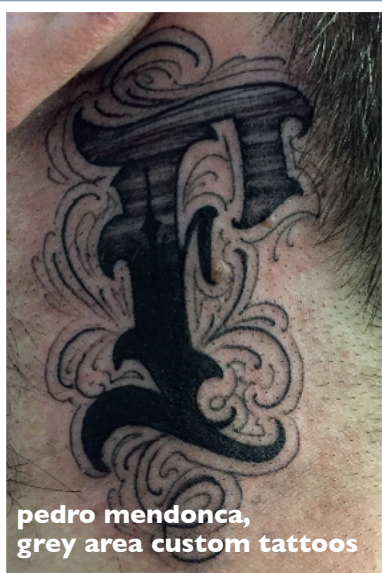
mater totemica, area industriale tattoo (italy)



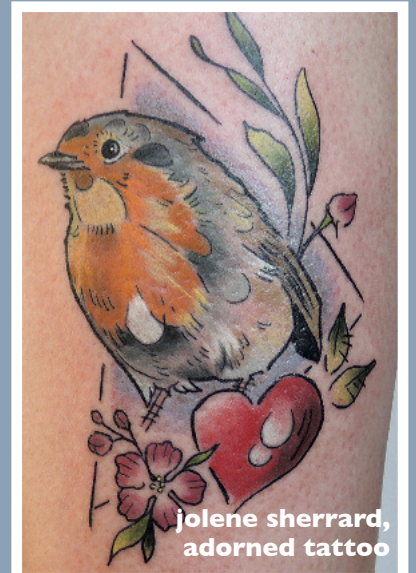
kirill putyatin, good luck tattoo (russia)



pete oz, tanuki tattoo



pedro mendonca, grey area custom tattoos



jolene sherrard, adorned tattoo



**will parish,
drawing blood tattoo studio**



**alex hennerley,
adorned tattoo**



**el jonez,
hell to pay**



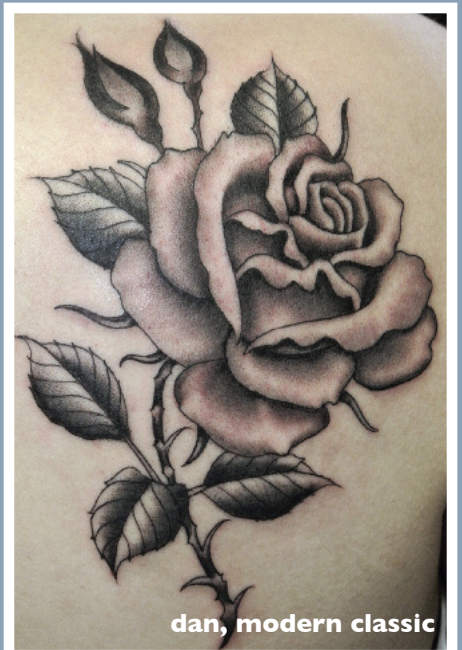
**santa perpetua,
black sails tattoo**



**craig bartlett,
adorned tattoo**



**mike decay,
blackstone tattoo
company (usa)**



dan, modern classic

max lutz, blood and tears (spain)



michael rose, michael rose visual art



luke somerville, jacks tattoos

chris jenko, ultimate skin tattoo and piercing



romi kundracikova, gothic tattoo



peppo, massive tattoo

laura lenihan, kilburn original tattoo



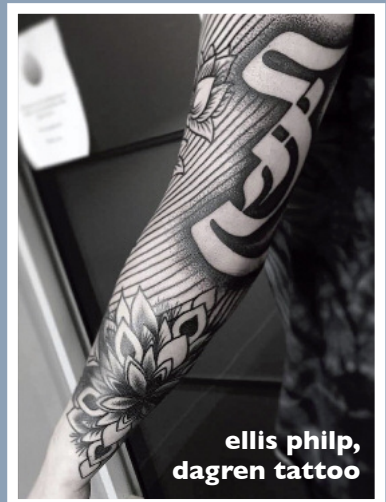
hanan qattan, four leaf tattoo



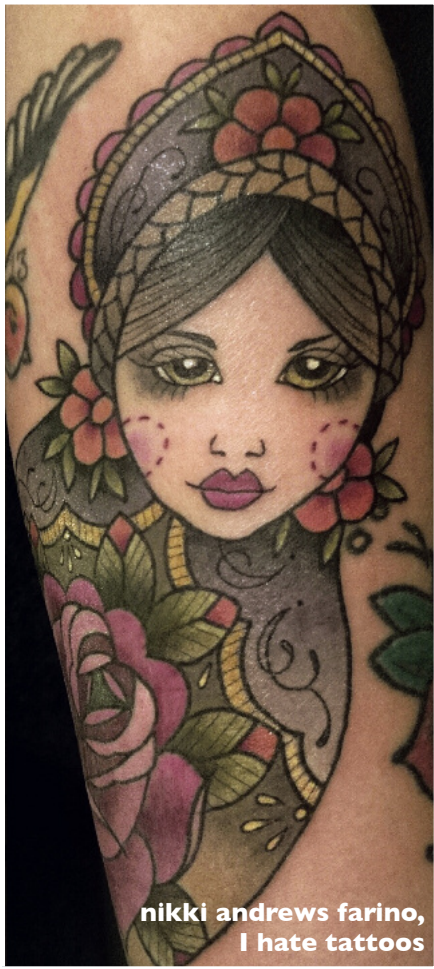
chris jenko ultimate skin tattoo



dave simpson northside tattooz



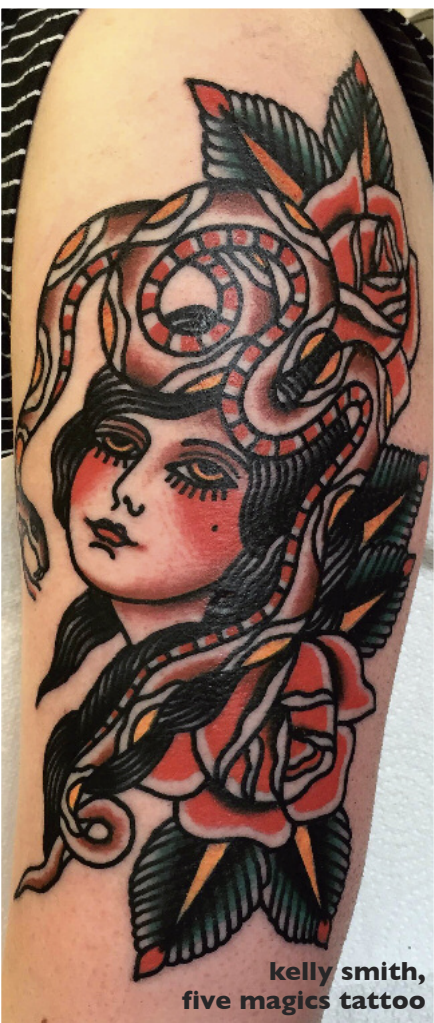
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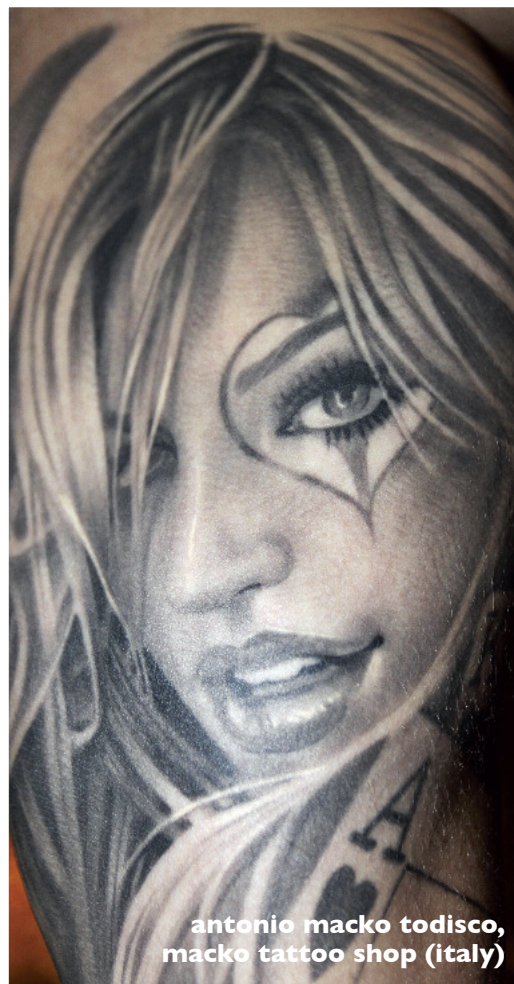
nikki andrews farino,
I hate tattoos



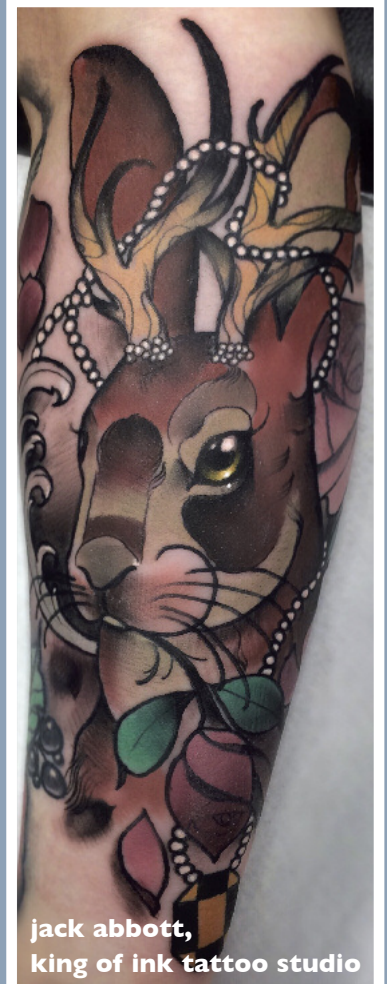
gari henderson
northside tattooz



kelly smith,
five magics tattoo



antonio macko todisco,
macko tattoo shop (italy)



jack abbott,
king of ink tattoo studio

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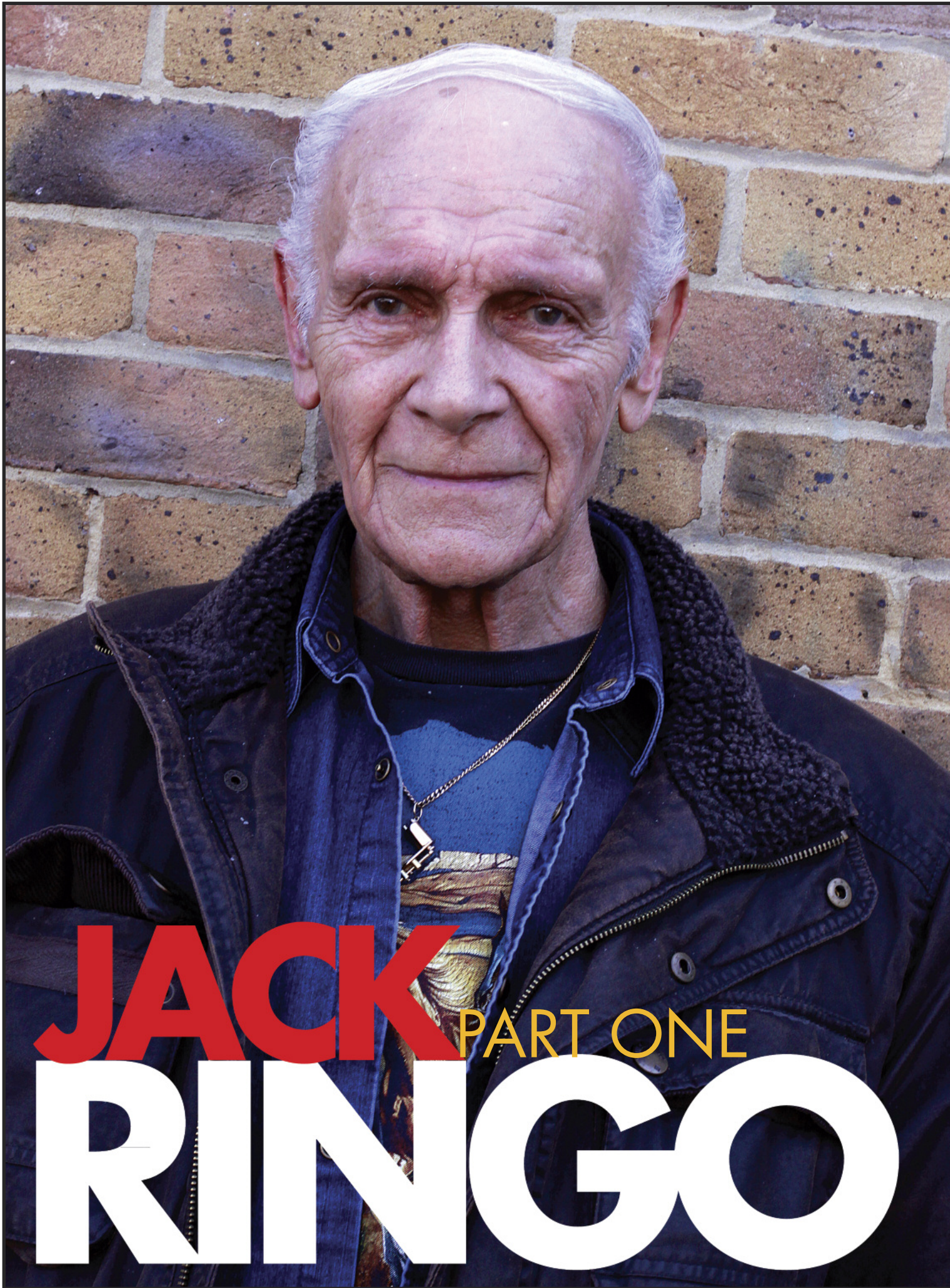
Ben

Danny

Gary

Chloe

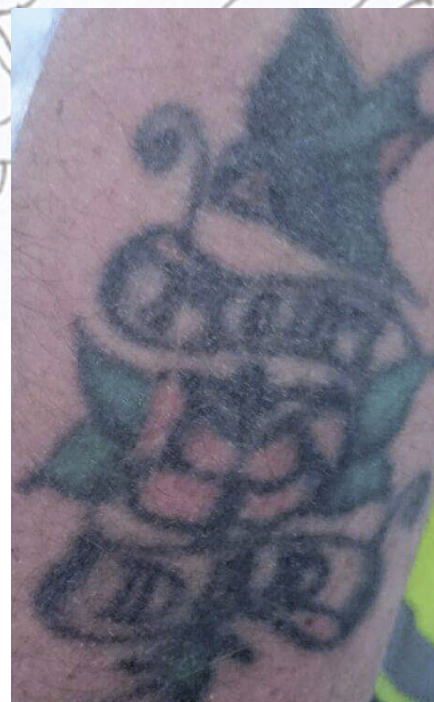
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JACK PART ONE
RINGO



Jack Ringo was arguably one of the most important traditional tattooists in Britain. Hard working, knowledgeable and with a ‘make do and mend’ attitude, he was the epitome of old-school tattooing. He tattooed for over 70 years; 50 of those from the same premises in Woolwich, South London. Even in his 80s, Jack still occasionally tattooed ‘on recommendation’ and remained as opinionated as ever about the industry that had been his life. Total Tattoo’s Perry met up with him earlier this year at Inksmiths of London, where Jack often popped in to visit Jamie Eskdale and the other artists.



Sadly in November 2015, just as we were preparing this interview for the magazine, Jack Ringo suddenly passed away after a very short illness. The tattoo world lost a truly remarkable man. In this exclusive two-part feature, we let Jack tell his story and share tales from his extraordinary life in his own way, in his own words. We hope you relish this unique look back at so many decades of rich tattoo history.

Jack Ringo was born in Charlton and brought up in Plumstead; he was a south Londoner through and through. His father was a tattooist in Woolwich and began to train Jack when he was just 16 years old. “I didn’t particularly want to be trained in tattooing,” Jack told me. “I was more interested in getting into engineering. After I left school I spent a couple of years working in factories, because my father said ‘I want you to do some tattooing, but I think you ought to have a second string to your bow, to carry you if anything goes wrong.’ I only did part of my tattoo apprenticeship, because I got called up to do National Service in the Navy when I was 18.

“Like a lot of kids, I didn’t want to get the call-up. But after the first eight weeks training it got easier, once I got past the discipline and the drills. The training was condensed into just the eight weeks because we were conscripts; then we were straight onto a ship. I was a stoker. I worked in the Mediterranean, the South of France, Gibraltar and Italy, amongst other places.

“I took my tattoo gear with me and would tattoo other crew members. There was no money in it though. The wages were crap back then, so I would be paid in duty free cigarettes. I was known as the tobacco baron, because they’d give me cigarettes in exchange for a tattoo, borrow them again and then give me back extra at the end of the month!

“The last ship I was on was a German oil tanker. It had a laundry room at each end, but one was disused. I found a mate in the engineer’s office and I said ‘That disused laundry... lend me the key.’ He asked why and I said ‘So I can make a copy!’ On a Friday night I would take my bookings to

this laundry room. We'd lock ourselves in and I'd tattoo them. I was running my machines with 12v batteries from the emergency lighting systems in the Mess. I'd finish at midnight, then we had to be careful coming out, one at a time, so as not to be caught by any of the officers."

After being discharged from the Navy, Jack didn't plan to go back to working in the family tattoo studio. However, his father's health was deteriorating so Jack had to weigh up his options. "After National Service I worked on the river in the dredging service, because I wanted to get into diving. I spent my last six months in the Navy based in Scotland where I did a diving course. But after a year or so my dad became ill and asked me to come back and help out. He lasted sixteen months and died from lung cancer, aged 48. What was I to do? Stick with tattooing or do diving? I spoke to a few guys in the diving profession who advised me against it; working long term with compressed air would make you an old man by the time you're 40 they said, and then you're no good to anybody. So I decided to stick with tattooing."

"The landlord of my dad's shop kicked me out when he died, so I moved into what was a coffee shop at the time. The rent was a pound a week. I stayed there until 1970, when they started to redevelop the area. I moved to the other side of Woolwich, where I stayed until 2001. It was a good pitch as it was only me there. Jack was in Kings Cross, where he'd moved from Tottenham, George Burchett was in Waterloo, Harry Potter was in Gravesend and Charlie Bell was in Chatham. And that was it. We didn't tread on each others' toes."



"The best period was the seventies. When the country changed over from imperial to decimal coinage, we started to make some money. I think it was mainly because people didn't know the value of the money they were spending until they got used to it. It carried on from there. The winters got better and, by the time I retired, I was doing alright in the winter. Not like I did in the summer, but I was still turning money over."

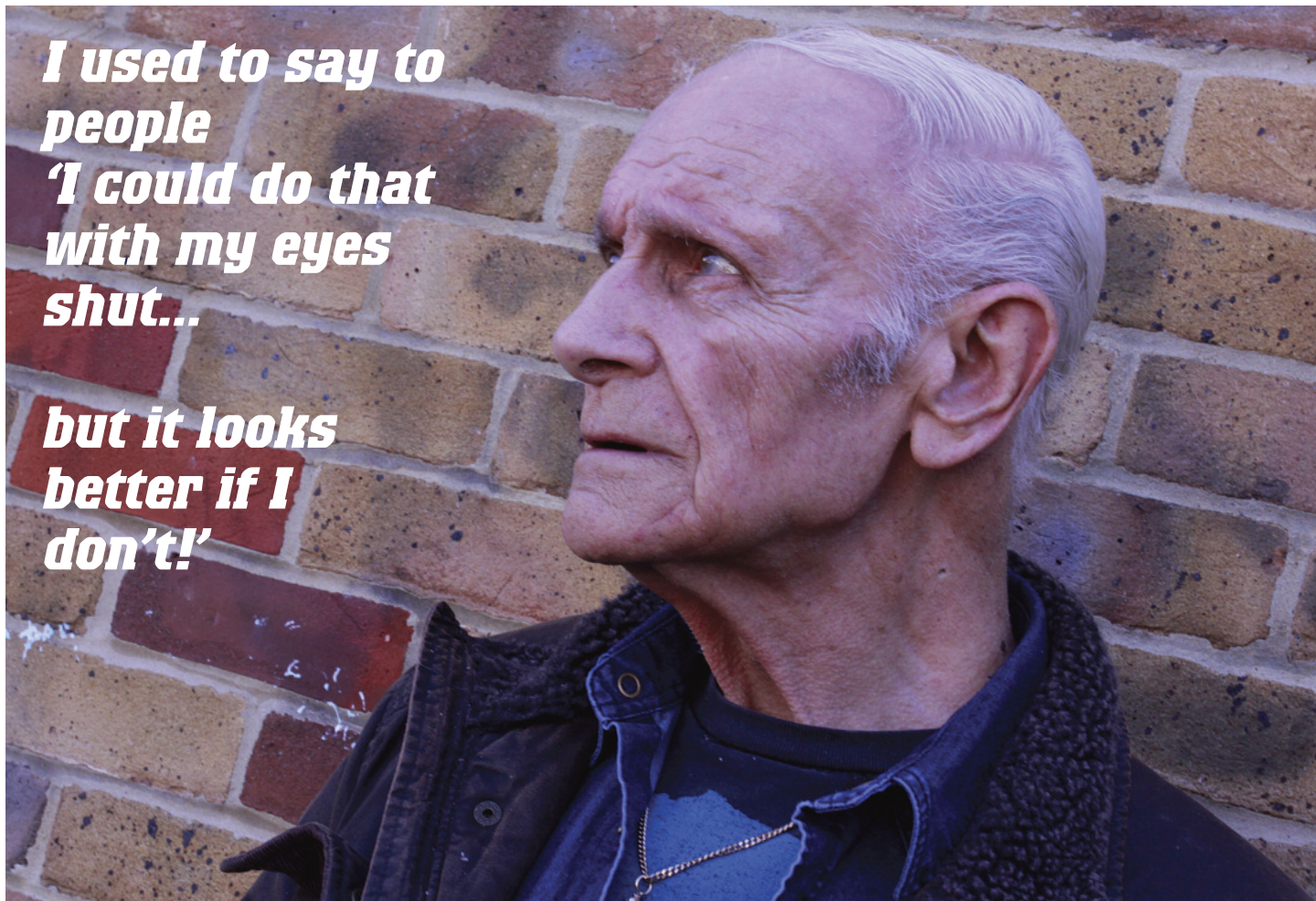
Jack's interest and experience in engineering stood him in good stead for the practicalities of tattooing. At the time, the industry's secrets were closely guarded and, in this era before the advent of tattoo supply companies, there was a need for frugality and inventiveness.

"My generation made all our own needles, colours and machines. In those days you could buy a Nick Picaro machine in kit form from the States for £4.50, which is peanuts these days but back then it was quite a lot. But if you could find an old electric door bell and stick a spring on it, then put it on a wooden frame... That's how I started! I nicked the spring out of my mum's corset! It was about three eighths of an inch wide and was just right. She used to have a go at me, 'Ere, have you been at my corsets again?'"



I used to say to people 'I could do that with my eyes shut...'

but it looks better if I don't!



"I worked with coils until 1964, when I saw a rotary machine and thought 'I could make one of those.' I used precision-made extraction fan motors from old aircraft. They were 12v and lasted for years. Not like today when you'd be lucky to get a few months out of them. The worth of the machine is really in the motor. All the time I was tattooing I never bought a machine. I always made them."

During this time, as well as the difficulty of finding equipment, it was also incredibly hard to learn from one's peers. Jack was tattooed by many artists of his generation, but the motivation to do so wasn't always artistic. "When I first got into the business I used to get tattooed to glean information. Tattooing was a closed shop and people didn't want to tell you anything. Even though they knew my dad was a tattooist, they were reluctant to pass on information, especially colour suppliers and things like that. If you wanted to find stuff like that you had to really get in with someone. When I started, there were only a few of us and they wanted to keep it that way. The more people knew about these things, the more tattooists there would be, and they were worried about it. I don't know what some of the old boys would think now. You only need to pick up a tattoo magazine or go on the Internet and the stuff's there."

"I remember talking to Harry Battle one day (who used to be in Praed Street) and I was after some red. He said 'I'll send you some for twenty five bob. What's your address?' I said 'I'm not interested in buying it. I just want a bit of information.' He said 'Well, you ain't gonna get it here.' I used to get stuff from art supply companies. Windsor and Newton did a red, but after

about five years they stopped doing it. Cornelissen used to do a pigment called Rose Manor. Burchett used to use it. It was more of a pink than a red and it'd fade in about two years. There weren't any real reds until Spaulding and Rogers came on the scene in the sixties. They also brought out a yellow which you could trust. Before that, reds had mercury in and yellow contained cadmium. That's why they were unsafe to use. They used to blister up in the skin. Some people's skin would tolerate it and some wouldn't. Spaulding and Rogers brought out stuff that was safe to use, so we started dealing with them. When they started supplying, you couldn't get anything from them without providing a business card."

"The first help I had was from Les Burchett. He knew my father, so he used to tolerate me going up there and bending his ear. From there, I visited Ben Gunn and watched him work. My father always said 'If you want to learn anything keep your eyes open and your mouth shut.' So I learnt a lot by watching."

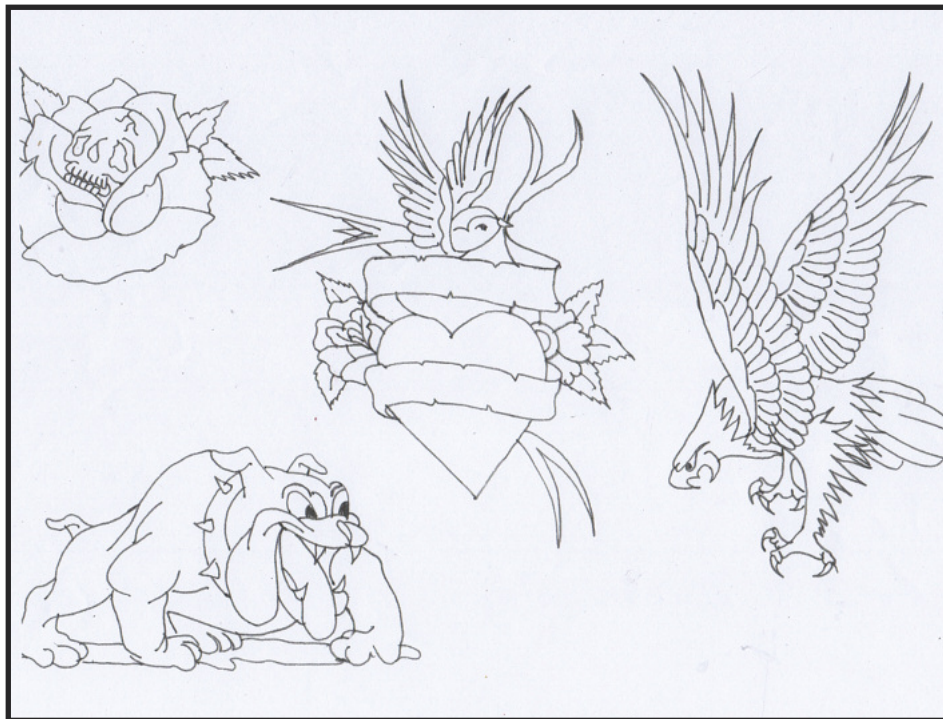
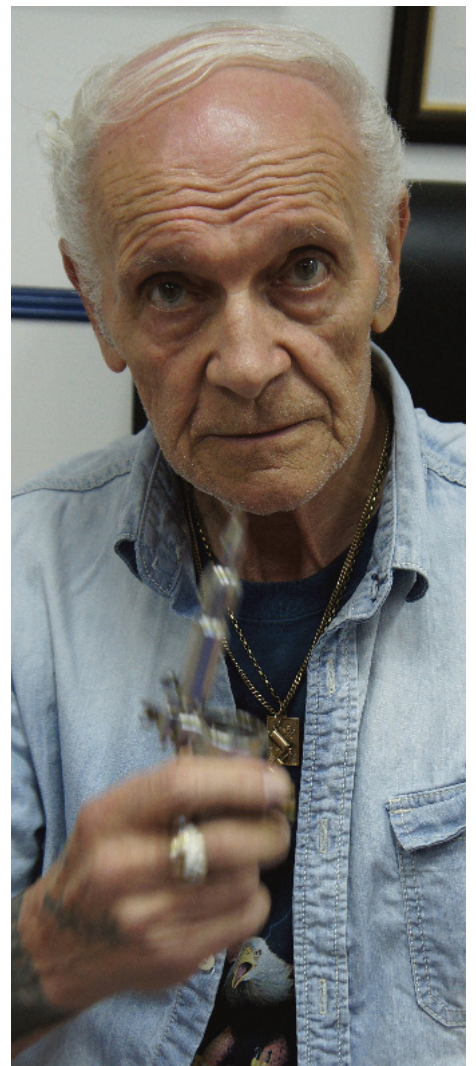


Jack Ringo tattooed for an astonishing 70 years and got to know some of the legendary names of tattooing. He was influenced by them and, in turn, has been an influence on those who followed. He spoke about some of the pivotal points in his extensive career. "One time when I was in the Navy, in Glasgow for the weekend, we went to see Bert Vallar, down Argyle Street. I'd never seen water shading like that before. When we went in, he was tattooing a rose on someone and it looked like a photograph. It was beautiful work. That turned my head around. I realised I had to get experimenting but I didn't get very far, because I was old school. I liked heavy shading and bold colour. But it stuck in my mind. The next time I saw anything like that was with Ron Ackers.



"Ron was one of my biggest influences, for the way he worked and the way he did shading. First time I met him was in Rhyl. He was working in the back of a toy shop on the seafront. I was with a friend who was visiting a relative there. Ron did a tattoo for him and one for me. He said 'You brought any gear with you?' I said 'Yeah.' He asked if I wanted to sit in with him for the evening, to earn a few bob, so I did. We worked all night and then he bought me a chicken supper. We became mates after that. He used to visit me in London when he came down. When my mum died, he did a memorial tattoo for me."

worked up. After my father died, I was left to get on with it. I didn't have a lot of artistic skill at the time but you practise and you put the effort in until you can do it freehand. I specialised in Oriental stuff, geisha girls and dragons. I used to say to people 'I could do that with my eyes shut... but it looks better if I don't!' I could do a small swallow in about three minutes flat. I never set out to be fast, but when you're doing your own stuff that's on the wall, it just happens. I'd use transfers for anything that was detailed, because otherwise you might leave something out, but basic stuff, like roses, daggers or eagles, I'd just slap on.



Tattooists often talk about artists whose visual style has appealed to them. Yet, when Jack discusses his peers, the influences seem to be mainly technical, as opposed to creative. In a way, this is a sign of how the industry has developed. "The art side of it has changed. A lot of tattooists now seem to have a flair, or have had some form of art training. In the old days if you could draw a heart and stick a bit of colour in it, that was it. You'd be good enough to be in the business and you gradually

"I'm old school. I don't do portrait work or anything like that. I do strong outlines, wall to wall colour, and it stays. It doesn't fade. I've seen pictures of stuff I've done 30 years ago and I still recognise what it is now. If you wanted custom work, it was weekends only because in the summer I was so busy during the week that I didn't have time to sit and draw. Pick what you want off the wall. If you want something different then bring me a sketch and I'll give you an appointment for

Sunday. In the summer, I'd get to the shop on a Saturday and there'd be about thirty people queuing up. I'd go to the front of the queue, walk past the first fifteen and say to the rest 'Sorry lads, you might as well go home 'cos I won't get to you. There aren't enough hours in the day.' It was always first come first served. People used to get there at 10am and start queuing, waiting for me to open my shop at 2pm."

Next Month:

In Part Two Jack shares his thoughts about tattooing today and what he thinks lies ahead in the future.

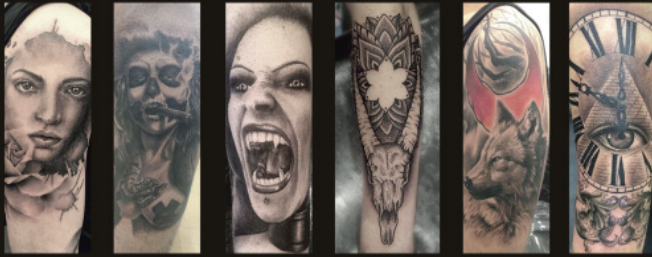


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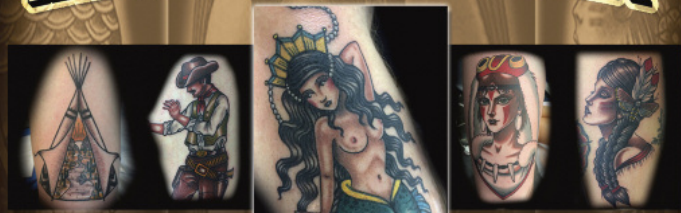
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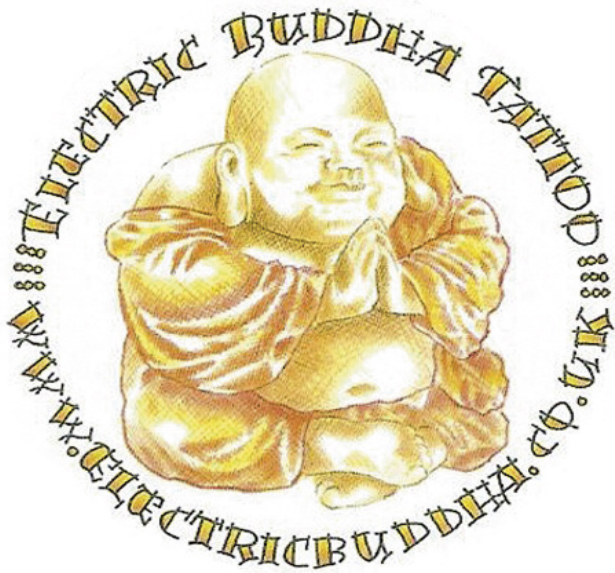
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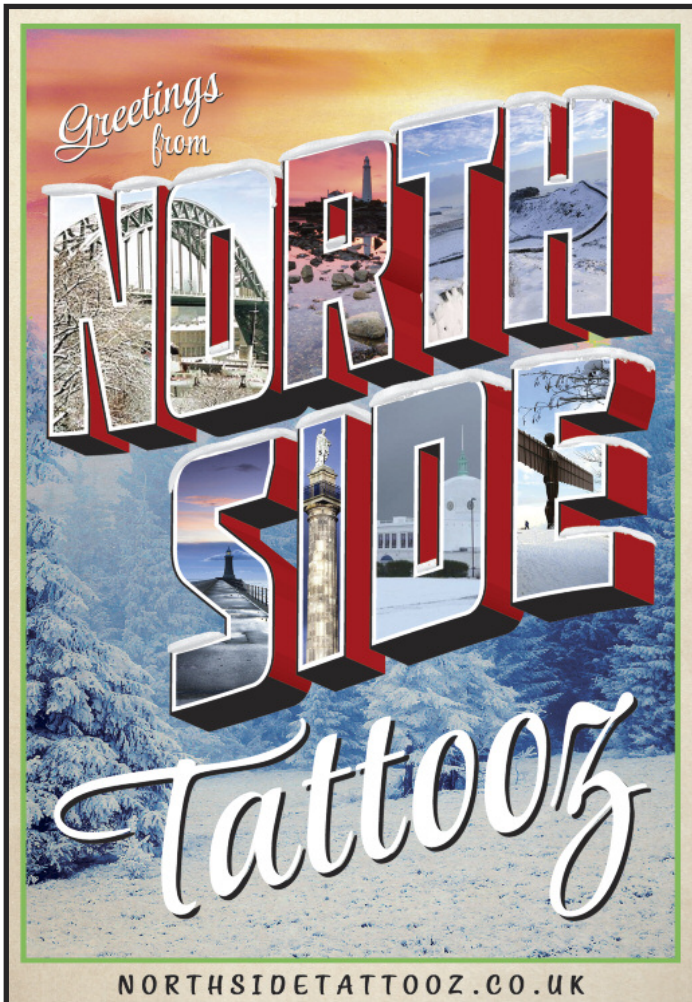
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SKINZ*PHRENIC TATT**

Words and pictures by Aiden Wylie

When someone mentions the word Iraq, many things probably go running through your head, most of them negative. War. Saddam Hussein. Illegal invasions. Occupation. Islamic State. Refugees. Oil... Tattoos would not be high on the list and yet, despite having parts of the landscape ripped asunder by the threat of evils too heinous to contemplate, this country is home to a certain flourishing tattoo parlour with more than a touch of dear old Blighty about it.



Zak Morris tattooing

The popularity of tattooing here is one of Iraq's myriad contradictions. The country is a desert state, yet in the winter the mountains are full of snowboarders; the government is inherently conservative and religion plays a role in almost everyone's daily life, yet the streets are lined with off-licences and bars; many women wear *abaya* (the long robe-like covering worn by some women in Muslim countries), yet women make up a sizeable number, if not the majority, of Iraq's tattooed population.

Erbil is the capital city of Kurdistan or the Kurdish Quasi Autonomous Region or Northern Iraq (depending on your politics), a region which is embroiled in a long and usually peaceful campaign for independence. Its central hub is Muntazah Street, the equivalent of the high street in any British town. When night falls this is where all the cool kids go. All the best restaurants are here, and the multiple off-licences are but five minutes' walk away, on what is called Booze Alley by the ex-pat population. Muntazah Street is also home to the Catholic church and, heartbreakingly, one of the grotesquely over-populated refugee centres. This is home to displaced former residents of Mosul who fled the horrors of the Islamic State uprising with little more than the clothes on their backs, and sometimes not even that. In the midst of this darkly contradictory scene, ostentatiously dominating the third floor of a shopping mall, is Skinzophrenic Tattoos.



The Skinzophrenic team



Readers in the West Midlands may recognise the studio name because Skinzophrenic has been operating in the town of Hereford for more than seventeen years, and its bold skull logo (a tribute to the Red Hot Chili Peppers) is recognisable to tattoo enthusiasts across the region. The studio's success in England is a fairly standard tale of quality tattooing, well selected apprenticeships and word-of-mouth reputation, but the expansion from the tranquil West Midlands to less-than-sleepy Iraq is not your run-of-the-mill tattooing story.

The face behind the project is Swindon-born photographer Peter Masters, who oversees the running of the Hereford studio while also travelling the globe taking photographs. A recent project brought him back to Iraq to shoot the Peshmerga, the battle-hardened militia that serves as the Kurdish front line in the war against Islamic State. "Hereford is a military town," Masters explains, "and over the years people would ask, 'Is there a tattoo studio here? Is there a tattoo studio?'" Things just fell into place for us. I met an out-of-work tattoo artist and it grew from there. It bloomed from one tiny room and five hundred pounds on my credit card."

It was the success of the original studio that eventually lead to the Iraq project, but in a very round about manner. "Along the way I've met lots of different kinds of people in Hereford. Some of them had connections in Iraq, doing different stuff," he says. "The idea of the Iraq project came about a couple of years ago. A friend and I had always thought that it would be a good thing to do, so we bounced ideas around for a while. Then, in 2014, an opportunity came up for me to come to Erbil."

Peter is a self-taught photographer who has spent time working in Afghanistan, so for him the opportunity to come to Iraq was not quite as bold a step as it may seem. "I came over and met another friend who was already here, and he showed me this place. At the time it was completely derelict," Peter continues. "It was literally when I visited here that the idea became a reality."

The studio in Erbil is a clean, comfortable workspace which takes up the whole floor of the building. 'No smoking' signs are dotted around the walls, the work chairs are protected with disposable covers and the artists wear aprons and latex gloves. Enormous air conditioners keep the place cool in summer when temperatures often approach fifty degrees celsius. In many ways it looks like an up-market UK studio. Not all tattooists in Iraq live up to the same standards, however.





“When we opened, there was another tattooist just over the road who definitely wasn’t regulated,” Masters says with a laugh. “In fact, he operated on his barbershop licence! When we went over to make an enquiry about a tattoo, the inks were left on the table, with the lids open overnight. I’m not even sure the needles were properly sterilised. I saw one guy’s fresh tattoo and it had swollen right up like a balloon. In England the place would have been shut down in thirty seconds. He’s gone now and at least there is now an inspector who comes around to check up. The government isn’t necessarily the most organised here, so he’s not always on time. He might just turn up whenever he feels like it, but it keeps us on our toes and that’s a good thing.”



Studio owner Peter Masters



Jon Harper

From day one, Peter and his team were determined to do things differently. “When it came to the trade licences and paperwork, of course the Kurdish government had no clue. We were a British tattoo studio coming over to open a legitimate business, so we based everything on the UK system. “Everything that exists now has been bounced off us. We had to send our documents, licensing and paperwork to the government here. They had to rubber stamp them, but it’s all based on the English system. Starting from the Chamber of Commerce in Worcester, everything was sent to London, where the Iraqi embassy processed it. It wasn’t cheap, but we’re now approved by both Iraq and the UK. I’m pretty sure we’re the first.”

Being a trailblazer has certainly had its difficulties but once Skinzophrenic got started in Erbil, they virtually cornered the market. But it was a market and a clientele that was very different to the UK. There is almost no walk-in work done and, while the studio does use social media and ex-pat websites to advertise, the business still depends on word-of-mouth for its core business. The parlour attracts a wide variety of customers, from Muslim women requesting tattooed eyebrows to Peshmerga militia men asking for Kurdish nationalist slogans and imagery. In a religious community (Iraq is strictly speaking secular, but there is a heavy Muslim and Christian influence) this brings risks and rewards. Anonymity is a big thing here, despite the conspicuous window displays.



“I suppose it’s the same with any religious culture,” says Peter, amiably. “I am fairly sure Christians shouldn’t be desecrating their bodies, but we do, and there is still a stigma left over in the UK to an extent. For Muslim Iraqis, tattooing is *haram* (forbidden by Allah), but they still do it. We’ve had a guy fly up from one of the most dangerous parts of Baghdad just to get ink done, but I am not going to tell you precisely where because there could be repercussions. I realise the older generations might not like it and I have met young guys who are reticent, but I have also met a lot of people of all ages who are really into tattooing and have lots of questions.”

There are other issues too. Tattoo machines and inks are not readily available in Iraq, even on the black market, so the artists rely on the postal service to get things sent out. With very few Iraqi tattooists willing to ‘out’ themselves publicly, Skinzophrenic has temporarily hired a number of international guest artists. Electricity in Iraq is somewhat less than reliable, so work often gets held up waiting for the back-up generators to kick in. Zac Morris, guesting from the Hereford studio, laughs when he says, “Next time I come back, I’m going to bring some more of my own stuff. It’s pretty old school here at the moment, but it really is an enjoyable experience. Coming here doesn’t feel like drawing the short straw at all.”

Business is looking good in spite of a turbulent Kurdish economy, and the studio has been able to keep going for over a year. “I don’t make a penny out of this, but we make enough to pay a couple of locals a decent wage and we never miss the rent, so the landlord’s happy,” says Masters. They have hired a full-time female tattooist and they also employ Lorans Ammira, a recently-recruited Kurdish tattooist who had previously operated his own studios in Sweden.



Jon Harper

The elephant in the room, of course, is the current conflict just a matter of miles from Erbil. Military drones and helicopters can often be seen and heard through Skinzophrenic’s windows after nightfall. Peter Masters remains optimistic though. He has a wider view of his tattoo studio. It provides more than just tattoos. It’s not simply the first fully-registered tattoo studio in Iraq, it is a community adventure. “Iraq is exactly what you see on television, but it is also what you are not shown. I have been all around the region and Iraq is not really that different from Egypt or Bahrain or even Kabul. Businesses are still open, people are still living their lives and they still have requirements and desires. We have had absolutely no opposition. Everyone has been really nice to us and shown an interest.” As Peter says, whatever happens, happens. As a believer in karma, he sees the project as an adventure that rewards the local community *and* the studio and its artists.

Iraq is a war-torn country, and war can be reduced to soundbites and clichés, but if you ever happen to be in Iraq, for whatever reason, take a look around and things might just surprise you. Like this little bit of Hereford, here, in the heart of the Iraqi desert.



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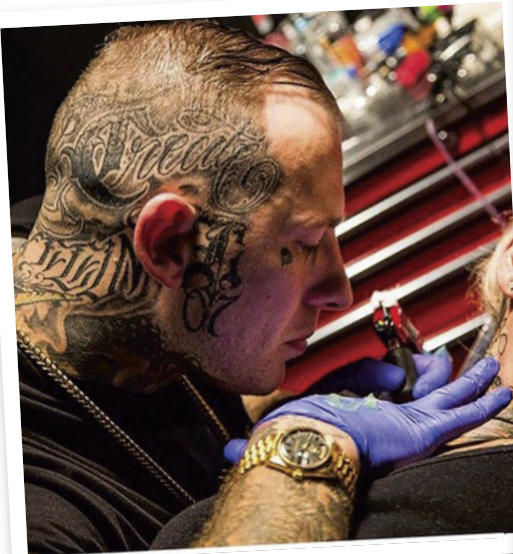
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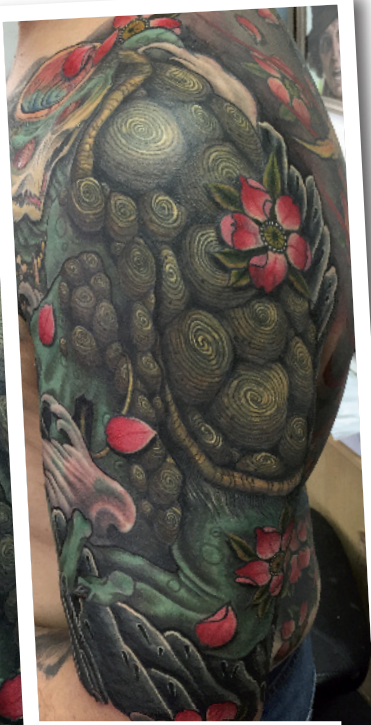
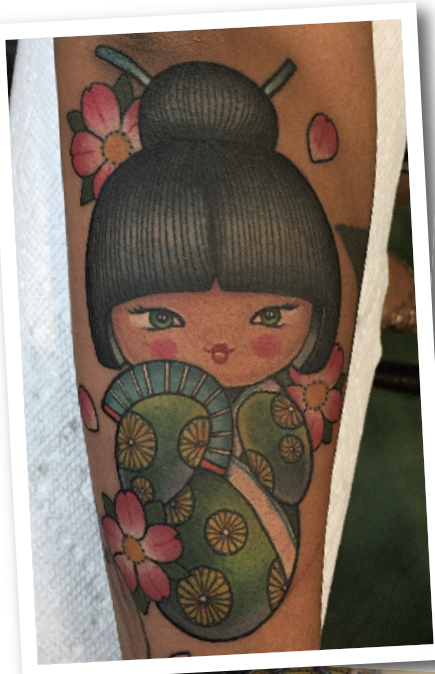
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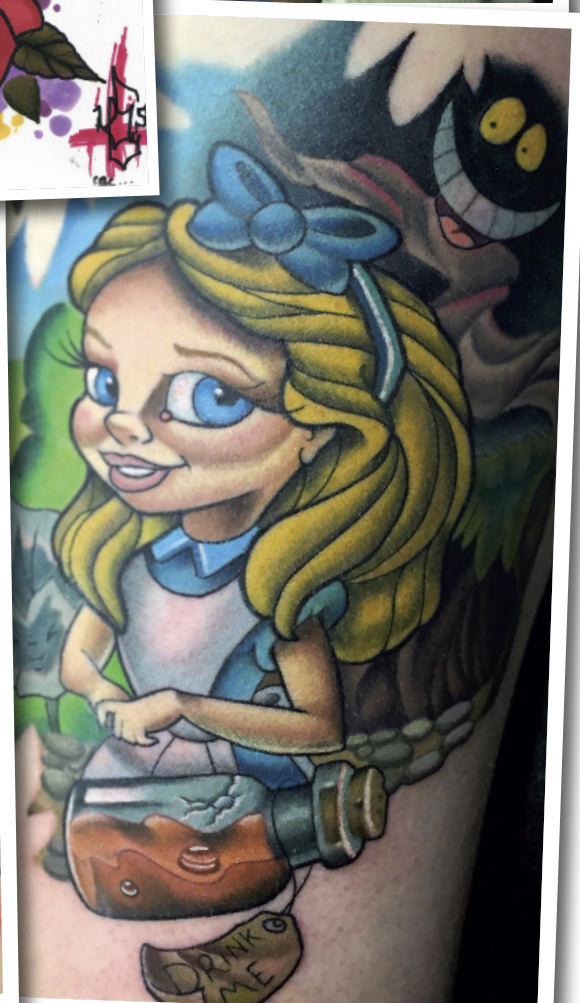
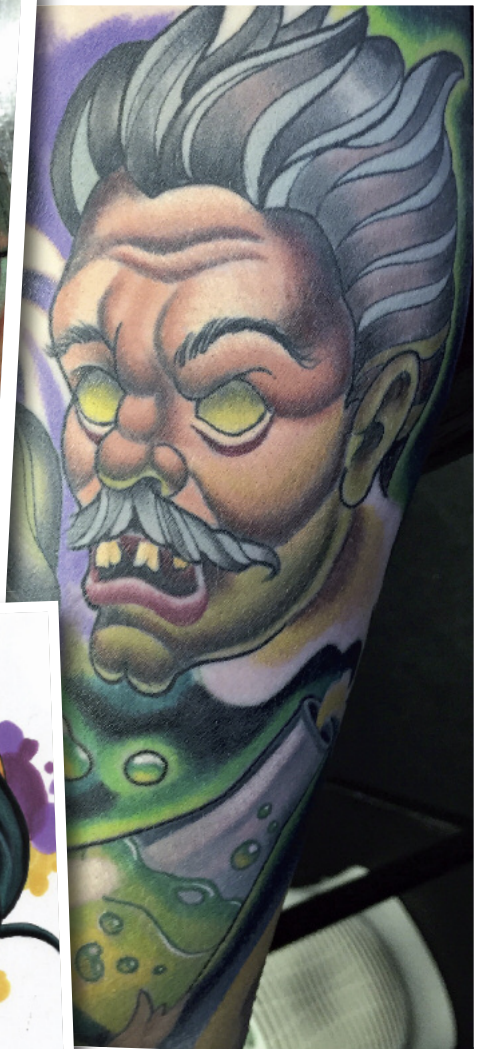
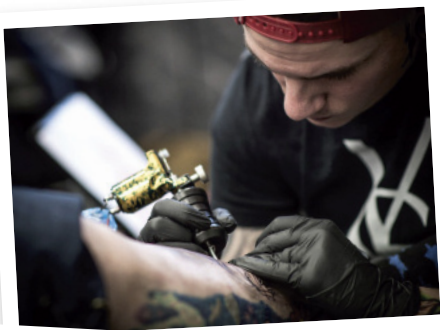
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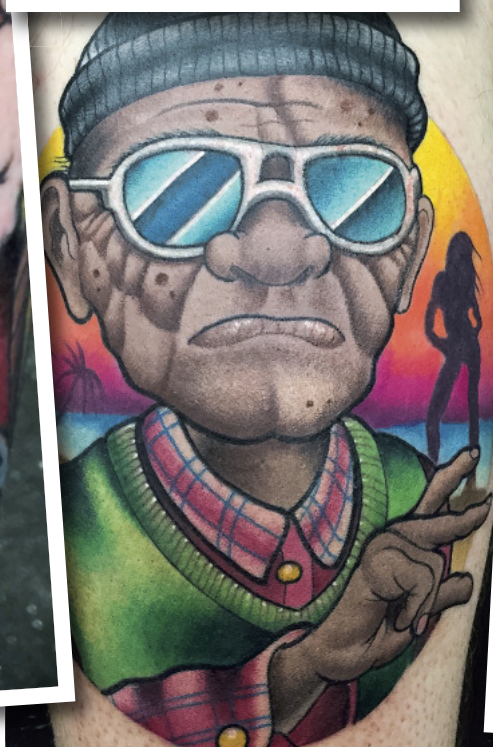
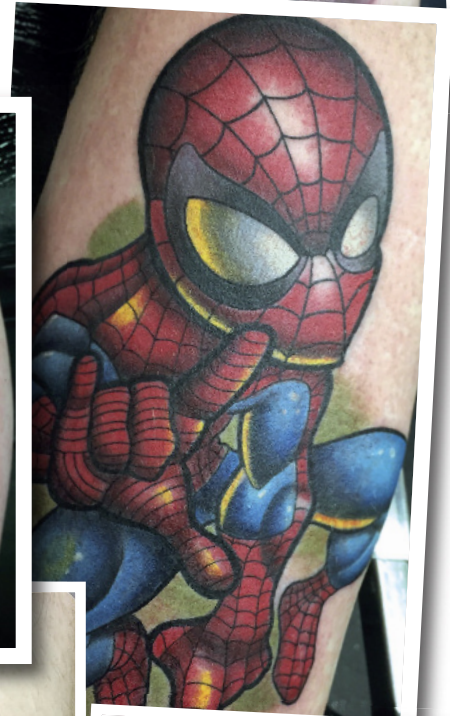
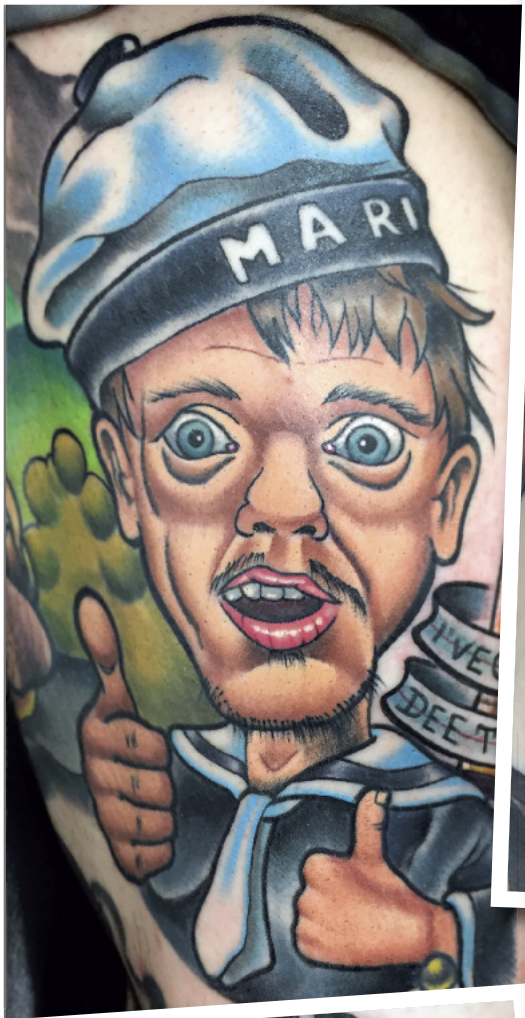




CALLUM BERRY

ABERDEEN TATTOO COLLECTIVE







Interviews by James Sandercocka

In 1974, Ian Kitchen went to see tattooist Dave Ross in Colchester, Essex. After two short sittings, he emerged from the shop with a splendid eagle across his chest. Forty years later, his thirty year old son Jay decided to have his own version of that same tattoo – an image that has been familiar to him his whole life – in recognition of just what his relationship with his father means to him. He chose Alex Bach at Flaming Gun Tattoo (also in Colchester) to do the piece. The final result is not only a very cool tattoo, but a permanent and very moving reminder of the bond between father and son.

We've brought Ian, Jay, and tattooists Dave Ross and Alex Bach together in the pages of Total Tattoo to tell us the stories behind these two very special chest eagles.

Ian's story

"My first tattoo was in 1974. It was a perforated line around my wrist, with the words 'Cut Here', and it cost 15p. It was the most painful of my tattoos, and it's also the only one I regret. Not a lot of thought went into it. I was a bit impetuous. Why did I start getting tattooed? Well it was something different at the time and not many people had them. It was a way to be individual. Now, they're a permanent memory of when I was young. It was a good way to finish a night out. A tattoo or a curry. Maybe a tattoo AND a curry!

"I had the majority of my tattoos done in 1974 and 1975. Then, after a big gap of thirty-odd

years, I fancied having a tribal tattoo and my birth date in Roman numerals. My favourite tattoo is always the one I am getting done at the moment. My most recent was this year, my granddaughter's name, and it cost £20. Will I have more? Who knows? Never say never! "I've had different reactions to my tattoos over the years. Some people think I have too many. My parents were alright about it (my father had a couple of small ones himself) but my girlfriend – my future wife – was not that keen. She didn't moan when I had her name done though! Now, after 37 years of marriage, she feels I wouldn't be me without them. They're part of me. When we were first married and we

went away on holiday abroad I got a lot of double takes and stares. Once, somebody shouted 'Hello Sailor' – because of the history of tattoos in the navy I suppose. Today tattoos are much more acceptable and not out of place. So many people have them nowadays.

"When Dave Ross did my chest eagle in 1974 it cost £9. That's £3 an hour. We did the outline in the first sitting (one hour) and the colour in the second sitting (two hours). I chose an eagle because a friend of mine was getting one at the same time. Dave also gave me some advice on what to choose. When my son Jay got his eagle tattoo last year it felt as though he had done it



regimental badges and now football badges (loyalty and pride), clasped hands (friendship), joined wedding bands (fidelity)... it goes on for ever. When I tattooed in India in the 1960s, every design was loaded with Hindu symbolism and meaning. But now, so much of what people say about 'meaningful tattoos' is laughably misinterpreted. How many of the people with tattoos of praying hands holding the rosary would have any experience of prayer, or understand the function of rosary beads?

“When I first experienced a tattoo shop I was nearly 15 and working as a boy on the Thames sailing barges. Whenever I was in London, I made my way to Piccadilly and made myself useful to Cash Cooper and Big Jock. The ambience suited me and I ran errands for the tattooists and the girls working the streets. Capstan Full Strength and Senior Service for Cash and Jock, and fancy cocktail fags for the girls – which they'd decant into silver cigarette



as a tribute to my tattoo. My eagle is part of his childhood memories. His tattoo is something to match mine, and something to remember me by in the future.”

Dave Ross's story

“You asked me if I remember doing Ian's tattoo. Yes, I nearly always remember my work on customers when I meet them again – even though I've been at this game for over 50 years and eagles on the chest were very common back in the day. I had mine done when I was just 15, by Charlie Bell of Clapham. I've always enjoyed the big stuff. I admire the courage involved – that's if they have it finished of course! An incomplete tattoo shows up a man for what he is.

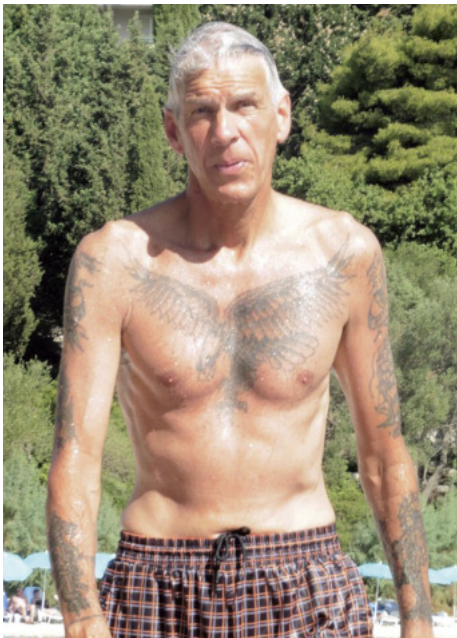
“I liked the rough and tumble of the old school tattoo shops. Years ago when we opened all night at weekends, things did get a bit lively – with Colchester being an army town, and the shop being in the Irish part of town. Sometimes you'd end up being stitched up at Accident and Emergency, and sometimes in the cells, or putting the glass back in the shop windows. It was all part of the game.

“Today there's a lot of talk about the meaning behind tattoos, but there was far more of it back then. People lived far more colourful 'hands-on' lives. Before the insidious cancer of social media, before computers dumbed people down, we talked to each other and had eye-contact relationships. Most young people did their jobs with pride and a sense of duty, and belonged to families that hardly changed from one generation to the next. Jay having the same eagle tattoo as his dad illustrates this. The flash in old shops had almost nothing but symbolic designs: hearts and roses (love), snakes (evil), a dagger through a heart (betrayal), a skull (memento mori), birds (travel), lions and tigers (male strength),



boxes. For me, Piccadilly was the most interesting place in the world. Where would you find the likes of that today?

“Nowadays town centres are dominated by multinationals, charity shops and pound shops. Honest independent shopkeepers are being forced to close down, and all over the UK businesses are boarded up. What I delight in is the guts of young (and not so young!) tattooists who are opening shops now. Most of the ones around me show pride, and the belief that they can make it. I wish them luck. Who would have believed that the humble tattoo shop would survive when posh shops are gone? But what has changed is the mindset of both the tattooists and punters. I see wonderful tattoos done by top names, and wonderful work done by 16 year olds on their mates. What has disappeared is the fun of guessing where the work was done. It's all brilliant, but generic and soulless.



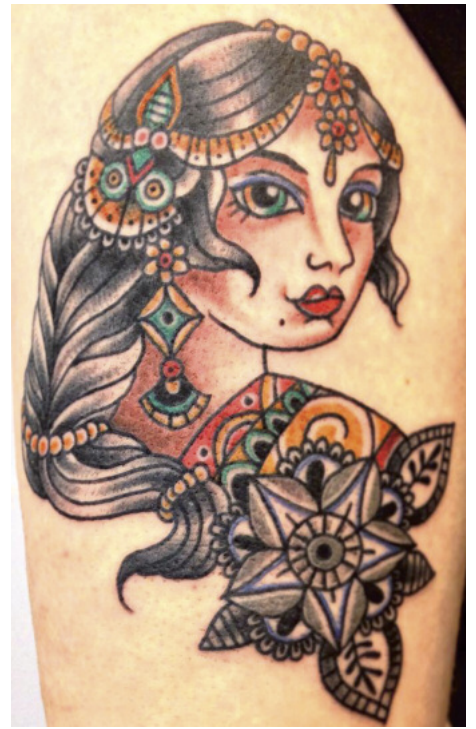
Alex Bach's story

"I've always loved tattoos and I started getting tattooed as soon as I was old enough. I quickly caught the bug! I was pretty good at drawing and painting and I've been tattooing for almost five years now. I've always been drawn to the traditional style. I find it so visually satisfying and I love the history behind it. It's important to respect the past and have the knowledge of how designs have developed and why. Every tattoo that I do influences my next one, and Jay's piece has really spurred me on. I want to research as much as I can about my art. I enjoy a variety of other tattoo styles – like black and grey and neo-traditional – so we shall see where my research takes me next.

"Tattooing Jay's eagle was great. It's a wonderful traditional design. Not every tattoo has to have a meaning – you can just appreciate the art – but it was good knowing the family connection. Jay's a great guy and family is very important to him. It's nice to give your customer the contentment of a job well done. For me, it's an immense sense of achievement that Jay is so happy with my work and that he will wear his eagle for ever – just like his dad will wear his."

Jay's story

"Ever since I was a child, I can remember my dad being covered in tattoos. Back in the 80s it was quite unusual, and my mates at school



knew him as 'the guy with all the tattoos'. I was always asking him about them – how old was he when he got them, where he got them, which of them hurt the most, etc. Right up to adult age my dad would tell me, 'Tattoos are for men, not for boys.' I think it was his way of reminding me that I would always be a boy in his eyes. Then when I turned 30 in May 2014 I thought it was about time to get some tattoos myself. They were 'for men' after all!



“I live in Colchester where there are lots of studios, so I did a great deal of research on which artist to choose. I stumbled across the portfolio of an old school friend I used to play basketball with – Alex Bach at Flaming Gun. At first I was one of those 'I'm only gonna have one tattoo' people. Then once I got my first, that was it. I got fully sucked in. I now have ten tattoos. All done in just over a year. And I will get more. I've just had my stomach and ribs done with a pirate ship, which actually hurt even more than my chest. But I'm a firm believer that a bit of pain makes you feel alive. And it's great having a mate from school (someone I used to shoot hoops with!) tattoo me. I would never let anyone else tattoo me now; we have such a good rapport and understanding. I choose the ideas that I like, but I trust Alex's judgement to create designs that will stand the test of time. Traditional tattoos never go out of fashion. When it comes to colours, I let Alex select those as well, and sometimes his colleagues make suggestions. After all, they do it every day and I wouldn't want to tell them how to do their job. I put a lot of trust into Alex's work and I am never disappointed.

“By December 2014, I'd already had the tops of my arms and both thighs tattooed – and my chest was looking very empty. I decided it was time to really go for it. I was considering two swallows, one on each side of the chest, but Alex said, 'Why don't you just get a picture of your dad's eagle? I will draw up my own version and we'll do that.' I didn't think twice. I

just thought what an excellent idea, especially since it was exactly 40 years since my dad had had his eagle done.

“The large eagle is the centre piece of all my dad's tattoos. He got it done in 1974 – ten years before I was born – by the locally very well known Dave Ross. As I was growing up, it always really stood out for me as it was such a bold design. When I was young it looked very colourful, but it has faded with age. (If I remember correctly, it originally had a lot of orange, yellow, black and green in it.) Whenever we were on holiday, or if we went to the swimming pool, it was always really easy to find my dad as I just had to look for the tall guy with the big eagle on his chest! It's always been one of the first things that springs to mind whenever I think of my dad. And because he got it done before I was born, I can't picture him without it.

“The eagle was (and still is) a very masculine design. That tattoo made me feel my dad was unique compared to other 'ordinary' dads. I used to think whoa, my dad must be a really tough guy. As I grew older I realised that he was really cool to have such rebellious tattoos, especially back in the day when it wasn't as widespread as it is now. And because my dad had always said tattoos were for men and not for boys, my eagle would be my way of proving to him that I had now become a man.

“Once I had finished having my eagle done I felt a real sense of achievement. Any tattoo enthusiast knows that chest tattoos are not for

the faint-hearted (they're definitely for the men, not the boys!) and I had sat for over four hours. Compared to my other tattoos, the pain difference was vast. Some of the bits towards the shoulders actually felt quite nice, but across the sternum and close to the nipples it was pretty bad. I didn't complain once during the whole process, or take any breaks, but I was certainly pulling some faces... and I remember that I was sweating a lot during that tattoo, even though it was December. Afterwards, I said to my dad, 'I didn't have mine done in two sittings like you. Only a pussy would do that,' which was my way of joking with him. He emailed back, 'Great tattoo, but you just need the chest to go with it.' He always has to have the last word. As I said, I will always be a boy in my dad's eyes! But I could tell from his face when he saw the tattoo that he was just as proud of it as I was.

“For me, this chest eagle was the ultimate tribute to my Dad. Eagle tattoos have lots of different meanings, but this one symbolises family. It will always remind me to keep focused, persevere through difficult times and stay motivated. It feels great to share it with my dad as it demonstrates the respect I have for him. And the fact that he allowed me to copy him shows that he has respect for me.

“I am now a father. My daughter Amara was born in May 2015. I am now the 'guy with all the tattoos', and my daughter associates the eagle chest tattoo with *her* daddy.



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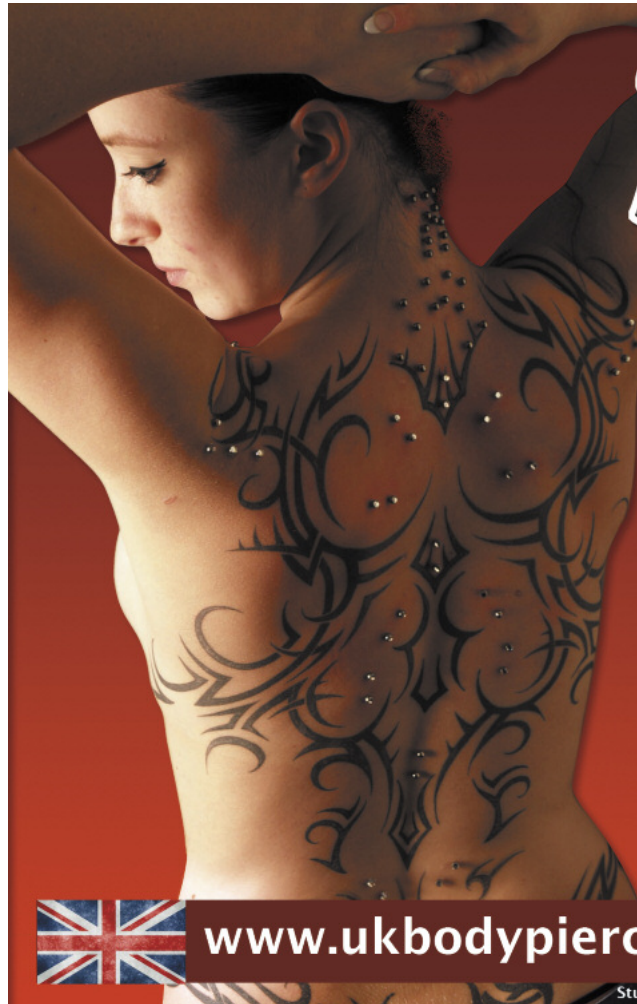


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HALLOWEEN TATTOO BASH

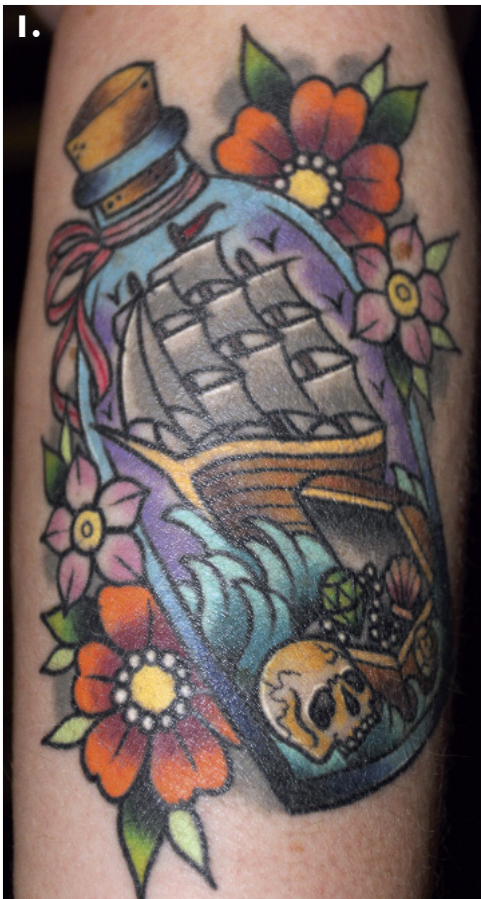
I must confess this was my first time at the Bash, partly because it's always been easier for other Total Tattoo journos to get there as they were closer to it, and partly because it clashed with other shows in previous years. But this time around the stars aligned, everything fell into place and I was off.

The Bash has moved about a bit over its seven year life but for the past two years it has resided at the Holiday Inn, Wolverhampton Racecourse, a few miles north of Birmingham. Through the hotel's reception area, back out into the open air of the racecourse paddock, through a door into a long corridor and you were amongst the traders and some of the tattooists. There was a goodly collection of interesting stalls to tease the pounds from your pockets. Clothing, sweets, tattoo supplies, jewellery and insurance were all on offer, along with the now familiar taxidermy stall.

large event. There must have been about 100 artists, nearly all of them from UK studios. The room was warm and cosy, in stark contrast to the wintry weather outside, although with no natural light, it did feel like we were in the belly of the beast. The event organisers Mac and Gefferson know a thing or two about tattoo conventions and had thought of everything. There were no loud bands near the artists and booths were a generous size.

A quick shimmy down the corridor and you found yourself in a large hall, housing the majority of the working artists. The sheer size of this room took me by surprise as I had no idea the Halloween Bash was such a

A highlight of this show, and one for which the Bash is justifiably famous, is Saturday night's fancy dress party. The lengths many people went to in creating their costumes was incredible. The party is legendary throughout the tattoo world and, judging by the collection of sore heads on Sunday morning, this year was no different.



- 1. alexandra roundtree, northern glory tattoo
- 2. dan, grizzlys tattoo
- 3. paul vander johnson, triplesix tattoo
- 4. real live zombies!



The show rattles along at a fair old pace, with entertainment in the form of belly dancers followed by fire-eaters, before the obligatory tattoo competitions. Categories were divided over the two days, with mainly colour on Saturday and black and grey on Sunday. UK convention-goers love their competitions, and the folks at the Bash are no exception; the queuing, judging and photographing went on for some time. Video cameras were on hand to project each tattoo onto a large screen so the audience could appreciate what was on show.

Sunday started slow but sure and the venue was soon filling up nicely. Traders who had looked nervous on Saturday night began to relax and feel confident about their takings, and all was starting to be right with the world. In no time at all I was back in front of the stage, snapping photos during Sunday's competition.



- 5. artist unknown
- 6. mark bester, marked for life
- 7. elliot wells, triplesix tattoo
- 8 & 10. clarke dudley, rendition tattoo
- 9. tony evans, opulent ink
- 11. elliot wells, triplesix tattoo
- 12. matt gardiner, end of the line
- 13. craig, new ink
- 14. ben dawson, tanuki tattoo



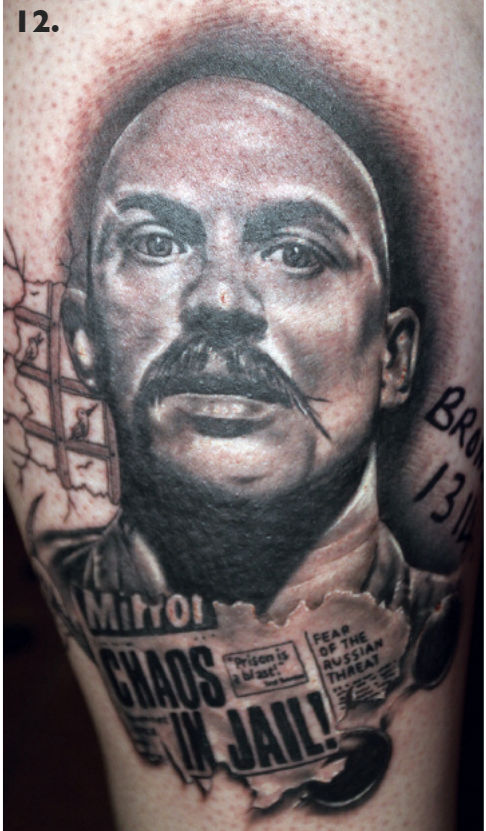
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This is a show with a very big heart, and nothing demonstrates this more than the charity auction that takes place after the competitions. Artists' paintings and prints, t-shirts, jewellery and beautiful artefacts are donated and offered up to the highest bidder. This year an amazing £6800 was raised for The Haven, a national breast cancer charity.

As I headed home late on Sunday night, I reflected on the highlights of a great weekend. A host of great UK studios had come together to enjoy the Bash and it was good to see that they were all busy throughout the weekend. It was also great to see Xed Lehead there, selling his unique prints. His ever-buoyant attitude belies the true extent of his recent health issues, and we wish him continued success. A whole bunch of cash was raised for a good cause and there was a kick-arse party to boot. I think I can safely say the Bash rocked. I hope the stars align for me again next year and I get another chance to visit this fabulous event.



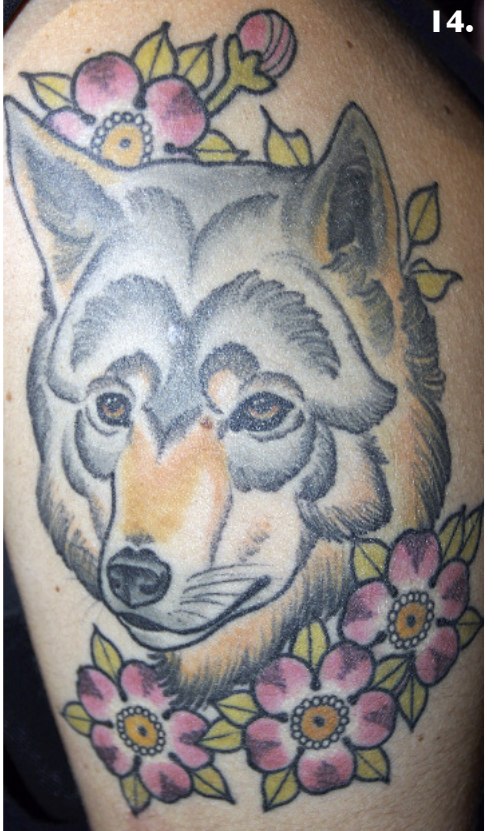
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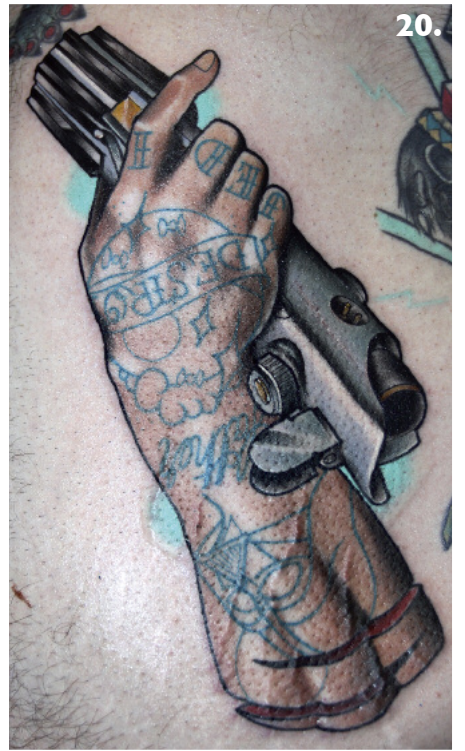
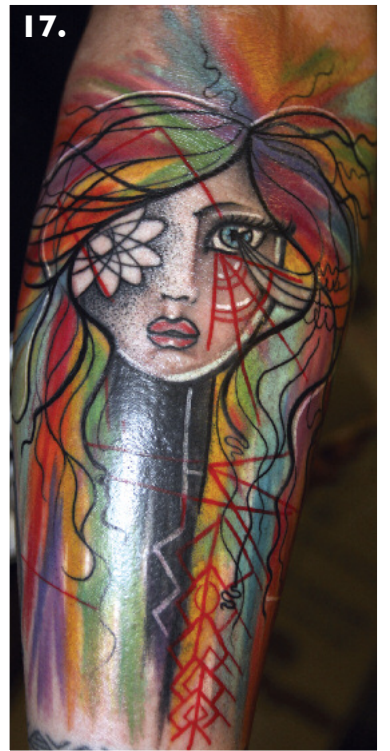
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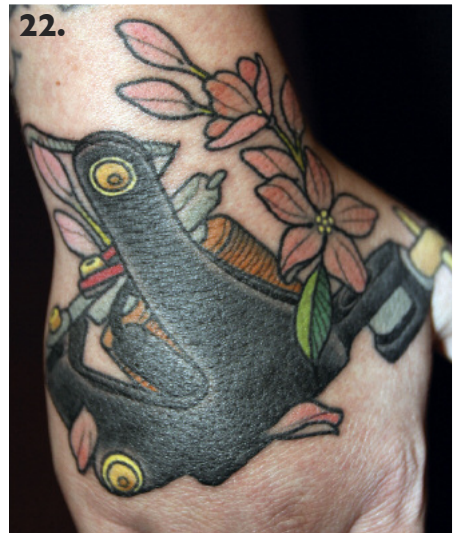
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14.



- 15. jamie lee nott, dark horse collective
- 16. bez, triplesix
- 17. hollie may, the old smithy tattoo parlour
- 18. william jones, nebula tattoo
- 19. shaun, borderline tattoo collective
- 20. matthew youl, painted lady tattoo parlour
- 21. shaun, borderline working
- 22. james bull, o'happy dagger





23.



24.



25.



26.



27.

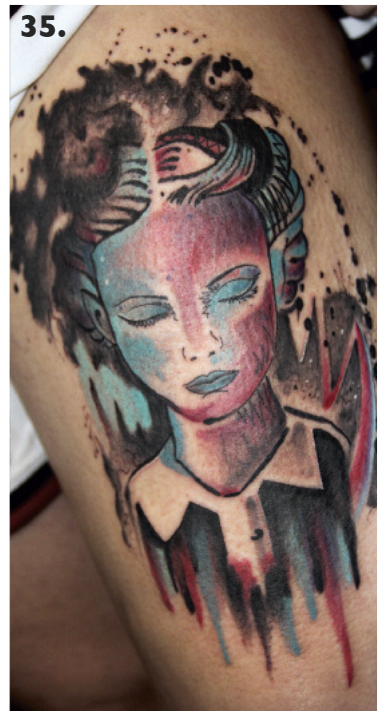
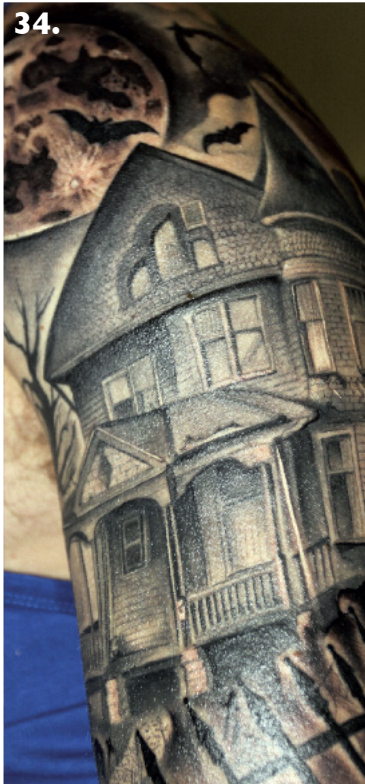


28.



29.

23. xed le head
24. kerry stone,
phoenix body art
25. miss terri, inkantations
26. paul terry, skin kandi
27 & 28. rich harris,
dark horse collective
29. chris bowater, studio 46

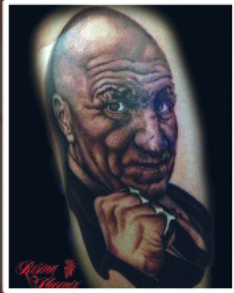


30. pj, rising phoenix
31. andrew j smith, painted lady tattoo parlour
32. ben o'carroll, panther crew
33. john parker, jptattoos
34. nick imms, painted lady tattoo parlour
35. lauren hanson, cosmic monsters inc
36. william jones, nebula ink



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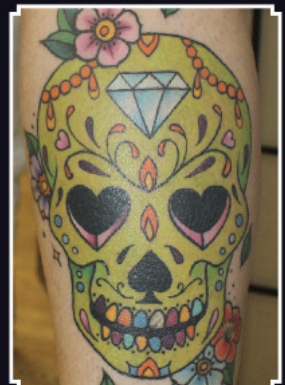


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KAROL RYBAKOWSKI

10 STEPS TO BECOMING A PERFECT TATTOOIST



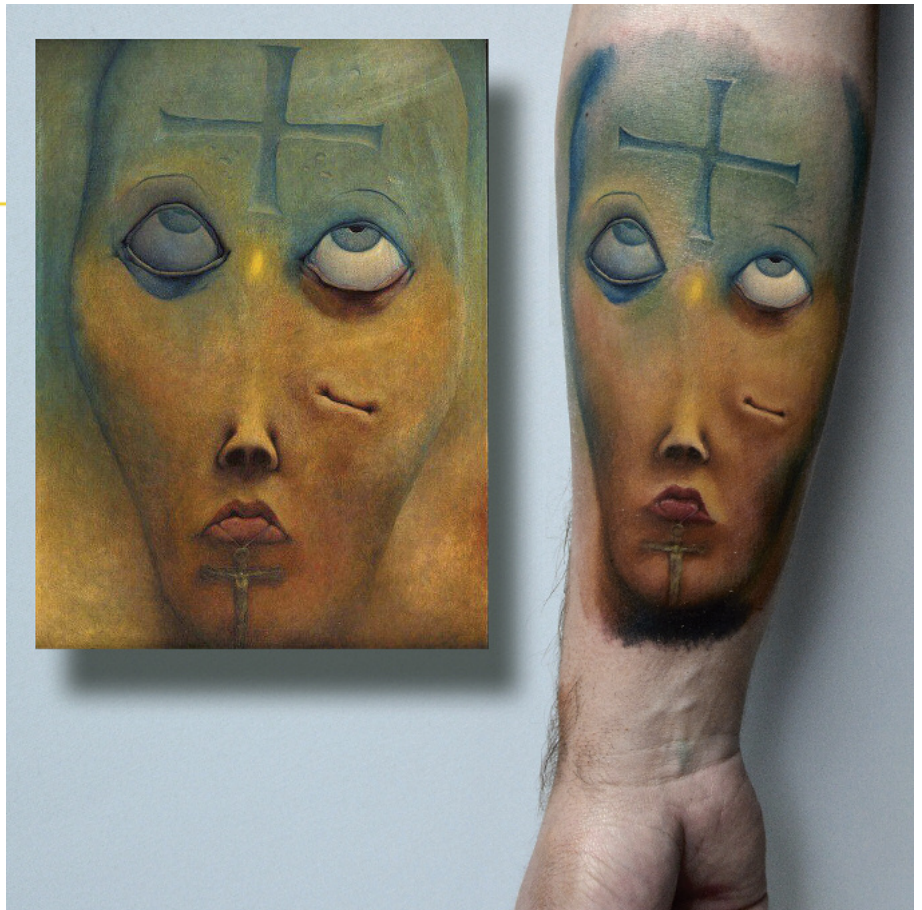
Naturalistic tattooing has been around for a while now, and sometimes it seems that we must have reached a limit as to how close to reality an image etched into the skin can come. But clearly we haven't. Karol Rybakowski, a young man from Poland who has only been tattooing for three years and is still technically an apprentice at Ink-Ognito, is pushing it further than ever before. His tattoos are so life-like that debates are raging on the internet as to whether they are actual tattoos or a bit of clever Photoshop trickery? They are very much the real thing, but how can someone get this good in such a short time?



Karol Rybakowski is blurring the line between imagination and reality, quite literally. If you look at one of his realistic tattoos, you inadvertently need to refocus your eyes from time to time to grasp what you are seeing. Is this really a tattoo or is it a photograph superimposed on to the skin?

Some of the images seem slightly out of focus in certain areas. Artistic skill – or were the camera settings off a bit? This black and grey portrait seems a bit grainy. Was it taken with natural light at high ISO to achieve this effect? This child's face is bathed in coloured light as if looking through a window to watch the sunset; and this bird's wings are completely out of focus as if moving too fast for the camera to capture it. This is the kind of thing that runs through your head. You forget that you





are not looking at photographs. You're looking at tattoos. They are done with Cheyenne machines, probably the most modern tattoo equipment available, but nonetheless they are pigments that are implanted into skin cells by physically tearing them up with a bunch of sharp needles! And what remains after the tattooing process and some healing time are these unbelievable *trompe l'oeil* images.

How can a young man of 28 do this after just three years of practice? Karol Rybakowski's work is the result of combining the ten essential elements of becoming a tattooist:

1. Talent. He excelled at drawing from a young age and loved it more than anything else. Portraits quickly became his passion and still are.

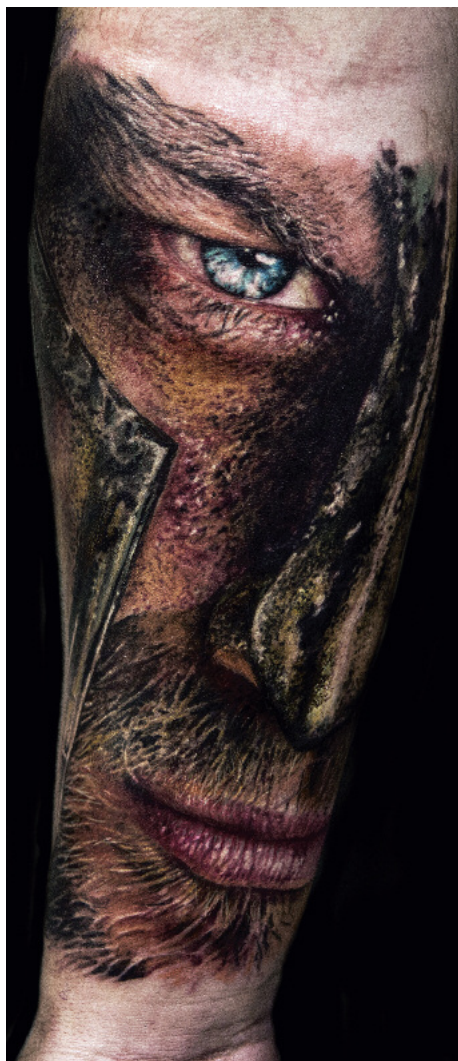
2. Education. In Poland, young artists are well supported. Karol joined an art school early on, and studied oil painting until he became a professional, doing hyper-realistic paintings for years. He's won a national drawing contest, been showered in prizes and is on his way to becoming a lecturer in Fine Art. His art education is solid: basic figure drawing, colour theory, proportions. If you ask him how he achieves the famous 3-D effect he is known for in his tattoos, he simply states "It's nothing really, I learned it in school. You just have to work out how to do it as a tattoo."



3. Luck. A bit of this is required. Karol moved to his girlfriend's hometown Rybnik (she's a graphic designer herself), and this just happened to be the home of Tofi Torfinski too, one of Poland's great masters of tattooing. When they first met, Tofi saw Karol's paintings and offered him a job right away.

4. Teacher. Tofi took him under his wing and has been tutoring Karol for three years now, teaching him the technical essentials, hygienic practices and, most importantly, the right attitude. After two months of tattooing, Karol did his first portrait, the image of a friend's father as a miner. Tofi trusted him enough to leave him alone in the studio overnight. It shows the mutual trust between master and apprentice, but Tofi also keeps Karol's feet firmly on the ground by being the best role model he can be.

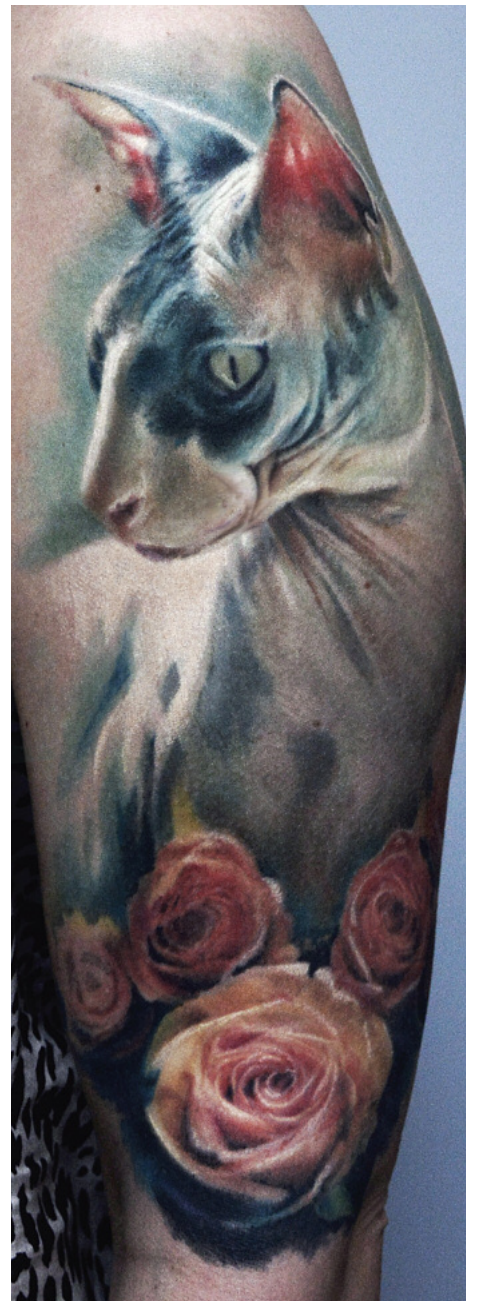
5. Attitude. Karol wants to be the best and is prepared to do everything to achieve that goal. His mind is always focused on the tattoo in front of him; he prepares as much as he can and works as hard as possible on every single piece, every single day. Period.





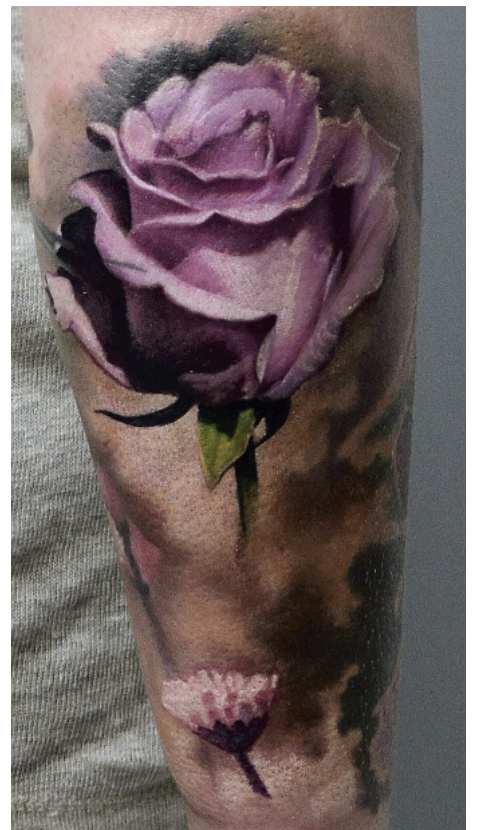
6. Inspiration. Karol loves visiting museums. As a matter of fact, he met his wife at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. He adores (and studies closely) the use of light in Renaissance master paintings and tries to emulate the atmosphere created in artworks by such artists as Rembrandt and Rubens.

7. Intelligence. He tattoos from his head, not his heart. He analyses a picture or photo, scans it into his mind and executes it step-by-step. Coloured light sources are his only artistic freedom, but otherwise he keeps a portrait as close to reality as possible. Because of this, he achieves a natural-looking effect, even after the tattoo has healed.





8. Technique. Karol approaches a tattoo like a painting. After sketching some lines in skin colour, he lays out a few basic shadings, and works in all areas simultaneously. Using a tattoo machine like a brush could be painful, but he has a light touch and avoids tearing up the skin. Instead of using pre-mixed colours, like other greats of this genre, Karol tries to mix everything himself. Black, brown, flesh tone, green, blue are the base pigments he uses for portraits (there might be exceptions for a background or clothing) and he blends everything with his machine, directly on the skin.



9. Caution. He is cautious about using colours, but is getting bolder as he gains experience. Tofi's years of closely examining his own and Karol's work have proved immensely helpful – knowing, for instance, that exaggerating slightly, with contrast and depth of colour, can help in the long run, leaving the tattoo just about right after healing. Also, Karol has learned that saturation of the skin is essential. When he started, everybody was using big magnums for realistic tattoos, but his own experience has taught him that the use of smaller magnums and round liners is more effective. It takes longer, but precision, saturation and durability are more important than speed. Saying this, Karol is by no means slow, and he can easily do a large colour portrait in a day.





10. Creativity. Karol Rybakowski says that he is not an artist. Nonetheless, he has a creative mind and lets it play on his paintings, computer graphics and even sculptures, done in the surrealist style of Beksinski or Dali. For now, he prefers to copy photographs onto skin, but his artistic mind will save him from routine, boredom and burn-out later in his professional life. He says “I love to do pure naturalism. I copy, and I like it. It’s not a problem for me. Only 10% of the clients think about creativity and art. 90% want exactly what they see in real life.”

The Bottom Line

Naturalistic and realistic tattoos are about producing a perfect copy of what you see. But it depends on how you see, and Karol’s eyes seem to grasp nature differently. He understands which colours and shadows compose an image, and what he has to do to reproduce it precisely, taking into account the specifics of tattooing techniques and the natural canvas of the skin. Karol Rybakowski is part of young generation of tattooists who don’t have much connection to the history of tattooing. They see tattoos and the tattoo world with fresh eyes, without the baggage of the past, and approach it with an open mind and a willingness to work hard to fulfil their dreams.

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On the web:

www.ink-ognito.pl

www.instagram.com/karolrybakowski/

www.facebook.com/karol.rybakowski



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IN FOCUS

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Chavez



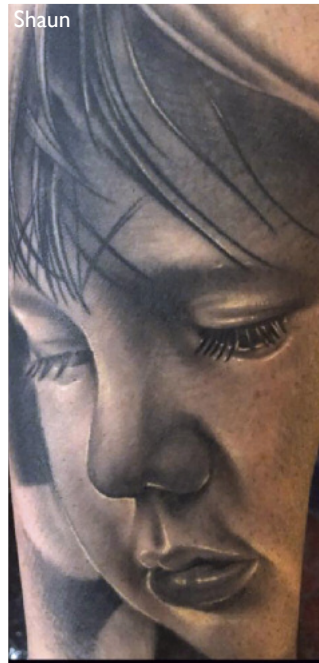
Chavez



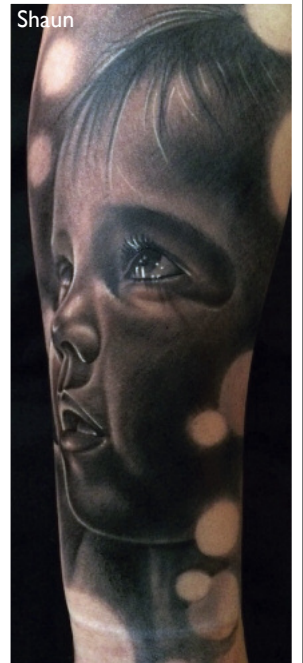
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Shaun



Shaun



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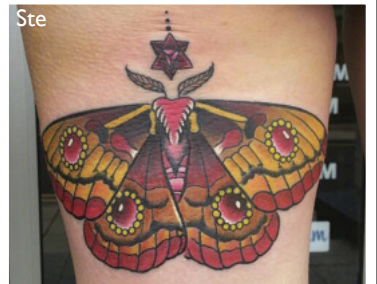
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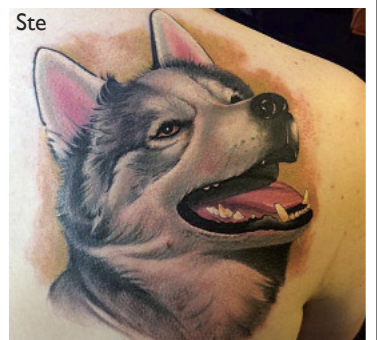
Ste



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CONVENTION CALENDAR

UK CONVENTIONS

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Needle Gangstas
Annual Beano

Pride Pkwy, Derby DE24 8XL
www.needlegangstasforum.com

March 5-6
The Tattoo Tea Party

Phoenix Way, Off Barton Dock Road, Urmston
Manchester. M41 7TB
www.facebook.com/needlegangstsa

March 26-27
The Scottish Tattoo Convention

Edinburgh Corn Exchange
10 Market Road, Edinburgh, EH14 1RJ
www.scottishtattooconvention.net

April 3
Ink and Iron
Tattoo Convention

The New Bingley Hall
1 Hockley Circus, Birmingham, West Midlands B18 5PP
www.inkandiron.co.uk

April 31-1 May
The Brighton Centre

King's Rd, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 2GR
blog.brightontattoo.com

May 6-8
Liverpool Tattoo Convention

Britannia Adelphi Hotel, Ranelagh Place, Liverpool. L3 5UL
www.liverpooltattooconvention.com

June 4-5
Northampton tattoo Convention

The Northampton Saints Rugby Ground
Weedon Road, Northampton. NN5 5BG.
www.northamptoninternationaltattooconvention.com

June 4-5
Scarborough Tattoo Show

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North Yorkshire YO11 2HD
www.facebook.com/scarboroughtattooshow

June 4-5
Leeds International Tattoo Convention

Exhibition Centre Leeds, Clarence Dock, Chadwick Street, Leeds LS10 1LT
www.leedstattooexpo.com

June 11-12
Bristol Tattoo Convention

The Passenger Shed, Brunels Old Station, Station Approach, Bristol BS1 6QH
www.bristoltattooconvention.com

July 29-31
Titanic Tattoo Convention

Titanic Building Belfast
1 Queens Rd, Titanic Quarter, Belfast BT3 9EP,
www.facebook.com/titanic.tattooconventionbelfast

July 23-24
Cardiff Tattoo and Toy

Motorpoint Arena Cardiff, Mary Ann Street, Cardiff, CF10 2EQ, GB
www.cardiffattooandtoycon.co.uk

OVERSEAS CONVENTIONS

January 15-17
Goa Tattoo Festival

Tito's White house, Arpora-Siolim road, Anjuna, 403 509 India
www.goatattooofestival.com

March 4-6
Mondial Du Tatouage

Grande halle de la Villette, 211 Avenue Jean Jaurès, 75019 Paris France
www.mondialdutatouage.com/en

April 22-24
Frankfurt Tattoo Convention

Messe Frankfurt, Halle 5.0, Ludwig-Erhard-Anlage 1, 60327 Frankfurt am Main Germany

July 15-17
NY Empire State Tattoo Expo

New York Hilton Midtown, 1335 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019,
www.empirestatetattooexpo.com

Tattoo Expo Bologna

Unipol Arena
Via Gino Cervi, 2 – Casalecchio di Reno – Bologna
www.tattooexpo.info

Oct 21-23
Evian Tattoo Show

Palais Des Festivities, Evian
www.eviantattoo.com

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mugshot

We ask tattooists some probing questions and encourage them to reveal a different side of themselves!

This month

Peter Cwiek Southmead Tattoo Studio

Who would play you in the movie of your life?

Rowan Atkinson from Mr Bean. He's exactly like me. My work colleagues call me Mr Bean because I'm funny and clumsy.

What makes you happy?

Spending time with my family and getting to do the job I love every day.

What makes you angry?

I am not a morning person at all. I hate them. I always wake up on the wrong side of the bed so yeah, that makes me angry.

What was the last book you read?

A few Polish biographies of people you probably you wouldn't know.

What was the last movie you saw?

Forrest Gump.

What pets do you have?

My crow. We keep him in the studio. He's dead now but at least he doesn't bite any more.

What would you eat for your last meal on earth?

Food is a big thing in Poland and I come from a mountainous part of the country where the fish is delicious. I do love salmon so I would have to say a nice salmon dish.

What's your funniest tattoo story?

At Blackpool convention when I was tattooing for 12 hours straight. I didn't finish until 12 midnight. There was hardly any light. I couldn't see from all the smoke as I was right next to the stage. I dropped my machine and broke it at the last minute but the tattoo still won seven awards and it's still winning them now.

If you won the lottery what is the first thing you would buy?

I'm a huge Audi fan. I've always had them and it's always been my dream to own two Audi RS7's: one red for the day and one black for the night.



What song would be the soundtrack to your life?

'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life' from Monty Python's film Life of Brian. It's happy and carefree, like me.

What would your super power be?

To be able to grow more hands so I can get more tattooing done in one go. Or telekinesis so I could mind control the machines to do the work while I sit there like a Buddha.

What achievement are you most proud of?

My kids and my family are my biggest achievements, but work-wise I am proud to have come this far in the tattoo industry. I wouldn't have got here without the help of my studio, especially Max Pniewski and all the friends I've made along the way.

What is your biggest regret?

I made a lot of mistakes when I was younger but that's all behind me now. I learnt a lot from them and it's made me who I am today.

What keeps you awake at night?

Doing designs until four in the morning. One my best mates and a former artist at Southmead Tattoo, Bobby Leach, moved to Florida. Because of the time difference, that's the only time we get to chat.

Any exciting news you would like to share?

2016 is going to be a big step in my career. I've got a lot of cool guest spots like Tofi's shop Inknogno in Poland, Mark Wosgerua's studio Sinners Ink in Denmark, and Moni Marino's Black Barock Art Palace in Germany. I'm also working at the Milan convention, which I hope will start opening more doors to the London show.

What is your favourite tattoo that you have done and why?

The piece that I did at Blackpool convention, which I mentioned earlier. Also a design I did in 15 minutes that came out really well.

What is the best lesson life has taught you?

Hard work really does pay off. Just keep pushing yourself, no matter what.

How would you like to be remembered?

As a brilliant dad, husband and tattooist.

Finish this sentence: Peter is...

... the clumsiest tattooist in the world.

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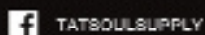


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